

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

#### Usage guidelines

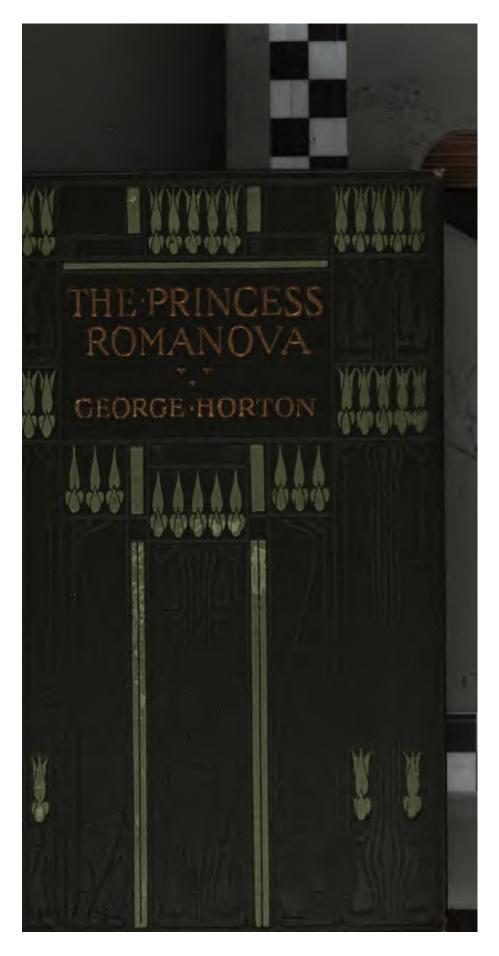
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

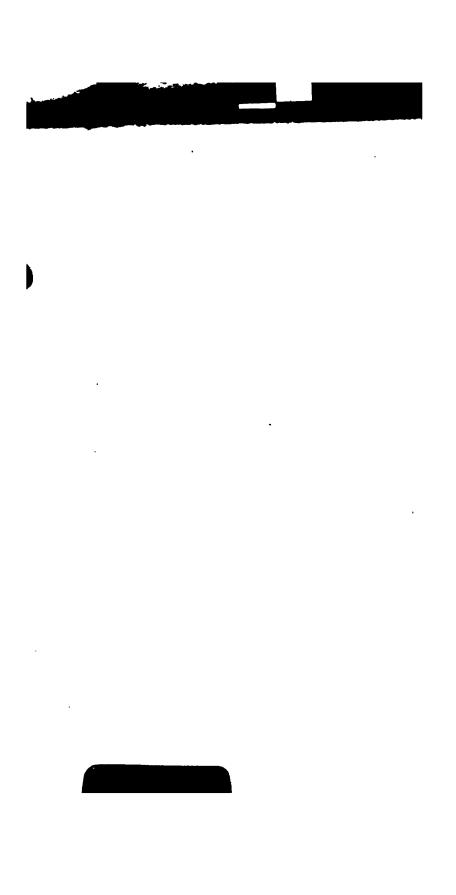
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + Refrain from automated querying Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

#### **About Google Book Search**

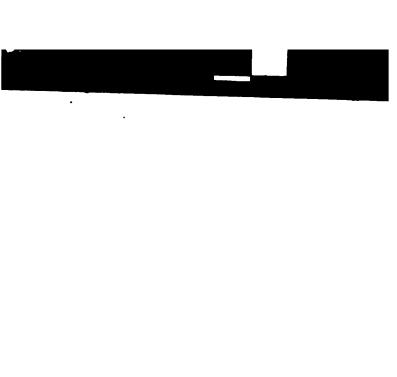
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at http://books.google.com/







## THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA







•



"Romanoff slashed at one of his hands with the knife." (Page 58.)

The Princess Romanova] [Frontispiece

# THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

----

A Tale of the Amus

# By GEORGE HORTON

Author of "A Fair Brigand," "A Fair Insurport," . . .

ILLUSTRACEO

WARD, LOCK & CO., LIMITED
1907



### **CONTENTS**

CHAP.			PAGE
I	An Adventure in Photography		7
II	In the Hands of the Police .		17
III	Aisome		24
IV	ONE FOND KISS		30
v	THE "SHIKOKU MARU".		35
VI	THE SHIPWRECK		43
VII	THE "TEIJO MARU"	•	48
VIII	DEATH OF MR. NOMURA		55
IX	Adrift in an Open Boat .		60
X	THE CHINESE SAMPAN		66
, XI	ZAKOUSKA		72
XII	In Vladivostok		78
XIII	WHO IS THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA	?.	87
XIV	HER HIGHNESS SMILES AND NODS.		93
$\mathbf{x}\mathbf{v}$	AGROUND IN THE AMUR		101
XVI	A THRILLING RESCUE		109
XVII	A GRATEFUL PRINCESS		115
XVIII	Boris Romanoff Arrives .		121
XIX	THE FLIGHT OF BURNING ARROWS		129
$\mathbf{x}\mathbf{x}$	ALL HANDS REPEL BOARDERS! .		135
XXI	STENKA PUGACHEFF'S FATE .		142
XXII	A HARD THING TO DO		151
IIIXX	THE FORESTS ON FIRE	•	155

6	CONTENTS				
CHAP.				P	AGE
XXIV	ROMANOFF AS A WOOER	•		•	162
XXV	"Sauvés, tous Sauvés!"			•	172
XXVI	LETTERS FROM Two Women	N		•	178
XXVII	GATHERING OF THE STORM	CLOU	D		186
XXVIII	ENTER WANG	•			192
XXIX	THE STORM BREAKS .			•	200
XXX	OFF FOR Moscow .				209
XXXI	THE PRINCESS AGAIN	•			215
XXXII	WANG IS JEALOUS .	•			222
XXXIII	IN THE WRONG HOUSE				226
XXXIV	CONDEMNED TO DEATH	•			229
XXXV	"IN THE NAME OF THE CZ	AR ''			240
XXXVI	ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES	Ano	THER		246
XXXVII	ROMANOFF BECOMES INSOLI	ENT			252
IIIVXXX	A BLOW AND A CHALLENGE	3			260
XXXIX	THE PRINCESS MAKES A S	TRANG	GE R	B-	
	QUEST		•		265
XL	THE DUEL				2 <b>7</b> I
XLI	THE GOLD CUFF BUTTON				277
XLII	ROMANOFF IS MURDERED				284
XLIII	On a Charge of Murder				290
XLIV	THE BOY AND THE PRINCE	SS			295
XLV	THE LITTLE FATHER				301
XLVI	THE GREAT ANT TRAIL				308
XLVII	An Eternal Farewell				315

#### CHAPTER I

#### AN ADVENTURE IN PHOTOGRAPHY

REDERICK COURTLAND HARDY, ex-member of Mrs. "Johnny" Folkstone's smart set, of Boston, ex-cotillon leader, yachtsman and clubman, was on his way to Russia, to take charge of one of the American trading company's stores at Stretinsk. He had lost his money and his fairweather friends; and had been jilted by a girl who, as it proved, was not theideal of nobility and womanly grace he had supposed her to be. Though plucky, he was, to use an expression more forceful than elegant, "sore." Had he but known it, the escape from the girl was a bit of good luck, sufficient to compensate him for the loss of his wealth; for no woman who deserts a man at the first blast of misfortune is good to tie to for a lifetime. But he did not realize this, for it is hard to be philosophical when one has just lost his girl, his friends and his money.

He received his appointment to Siberia through a friend of his father, old Frederick Emery, who went out to that country some twenty years ago, and came back to Boston on a visit, rich, and eloquent of the resources and possibilities of that great empire so little known and understood by Americans.

"A frozen region! A country of horrors, a land fit only for convicts," Emery shouted indig-

nantly. "Nonsense! It's a land of wide and fertile plains, on which the flocks of the world might graze; of unparalleled opportunities, of unimaginable wealth, of inexhaustible resources. It's the most promising undeveloped country on the face of the globe, waiting only for youth and brains and enterprise to make it the most prosperous region in the All along the Amur river are towns growing like mushrooms, of which you never heard, and whose names you couldn't pronounce if you saw them in print. They have wide streets, electric lights, department stores, modern buildings. The American Trading Company has established a string of stores on the Amur, and our profits are enormous. Your father helped me out once when I was in a hole. He's dead now, but I'd like to pay back in some way the debt I owe him, to his heir and successor. Don't sit around here moping about the loss of your money. You're only twentyeight, and the world is all before you. We'll make you manager of our new store at Stretinsk, at a salary and commission. We'll send you out there and advance you money enough to pay your expenses. You're sort o' spoiled by lolling on a yacht and hanging to women's apron strings, but if you've got any of old Tom Hardy's stuff in you, you'll pull through yet. I believe you have, for you look enough like him. What do you say, my boy? Will you go?"

"I will!" Hardy replied, taking one of those sudden and unexpected resolves which change the whole course of man's life. He did not even take the trouble to look up Stretinsk on the map. It sounded far away to him, and he felt a desire to go as far from Boston as possible; that yearning for distance which sometimes takes possession of a man

and is coupled with the feeling that he would like

to escape from himself.

He gained his first impression of Japan from the deck of the magnificent Empress of India steamer, of the Canadian Pacific line. After that long lonely run of 4,300 miles across the Pacific, they came one morning early into a vivid, though dark blue sea swarming with tiny islands and flecked with numerous sailing craft. In the distance the low, friendly hills of Nippon lay dreaming in a luminous mist. The fertility, European progress and enterprise of this land were attested at breakfast by the magnificent strawberries which had evidently been brought on board in the early hours by an outcoming bumboat; and a Japanese youth, who had been studying the tobacco industry in America, gave voice to the patriotism of the country by exclaiming as he stood by the rail, "Oh, I could swim ashore!" Hardy noticed that there were tears in his eyes.

The series of adventures which caused the excotillon leader to forget his troubles began at Yokoliama, and dated from his first meeting with Stapleton Neville in the dining-room of the Grand Hotel. The two men were seated together at a small table, and the American was gazing dreamily over the room, most probably thinking of that American girl who jilted him when he lost his money.

"It's a jolly gay scene, isn't it?" remarked his vis-á-vis, smiling pleasantly. He was a florid, blond man, with the peachy complexion of a Swede, rather thick lips and nostrils, a square chin, the bluest of blue eyes, and white, even teeth of a young dog. His expansive shirt-bosom—for he was in evening dress—displayed to the best advantage his depth of chest.

"The English always dress for dinner," Hardy

reflected. "They feel they are merely eating unless they dress."

If further proof were needed of the man's nationality, it lay in his pronounced accent, and the fact that he had not spoken a dozen words without making use of a British idiom. It was a gay's cene, and Hardy admitted the fact, his dark eyes lighting with sudden animation. They were in an immense dining-hall, brilliantly lighted by electricity, the tables beautifully decorated with a profusion of flowers. The guests—and the place was crowded—were attired as for some official reception or high social function. The bill of fare which the quaint little waiter brought and laid deferentially on the table, contained a list of eatables and drinkables that would have done credit to the best establishments of London and Paris.

"These people all seem to be Americans," remarked Mr. Hardy. They look like Americans, and the accent of those passing by, or sitting near enough to be heard, was unmistakable.
""" "" I suppose they are,

"Yes," replied the other, "I suppose they are, nearly all of them. The show places of Japan are thronged with your countrymen at this season, and they make fashionable resorts of them. I have been staying here for several months, and I do believe I'm about the only Englishman here. Permit me to introduce myself"; and here he produced a card, hearing the name, "Stapleton Neville, Travellers' Club, London."

"My countrymen," replied Hardy, offering his own card, "have a way of taking America with them wherever they go. They travel to the ends of the earth to get out of their own land, and then they so thoroughly Americanize their favourite foreign resorts that they might as well have stayed at home."

They went out upon the veranda after dinner to smoke their cigars, and there Hardy was better satisfied. True, the Japanese band was working away with great enthusiasm and perfect confidence at a Sousa march, but they played it execrably, and so could be forgiven. They made Hardy feel that this, at any rate, was not the land of Sousa marches and cotillons. Across the street, leaning against a fence, were several Japanese girls, in their dainty, picturesque costume, listening to the music. They were pretty, very pretty, and they laughed frequently, in a shy, coquettish sort of way. One felt that they were joking each other about their almondeyed lovers. Deeper in the shadow, where another was standing, a cigarette glowed and faded at intervals, like the light of a firefly.

"When do you leave?" asked Neville.

"The day after to-morrow," replied Hardy. "I am on my way to Russia on business, and I am supposed to get there with as little delay as possible."

"But there is no boat starting for a week. You can't very well leave for Vladivostok the day after to-morrow."

Hardy smiled.

"You forget our American enterprise," he replied. "I have learned that a small boat leaves Hakodate in three days, crossing the Japan Sea, and that by taking the train northward through the island, I shall arrive at Amori, near the northern end of Nippon, in time to connect with this boat. I have already had the agent here telegraph for passage for me. I shall thus save a week's time, and shall be able to see, from a car window, the interior of Japan, that portion of the country which our friends in the dining-room there get little idea of."

"By Jove! Do you know that would jolly well

fit in with my plans, if you wouldn't object to a travelling companion, and there should be room for me also?"

"I'd be delighted," replied Hardy; "charmed, I assure you, to have you come along. Travelling alone is a bore. Will you be going clear to Amori?"

"Farther than that. I, too, am going to Russia—through to Moscow, and from there back to England."

"Why, then," exclaimed Hardy, " I shall have you

as far as my destination—Stretinsk!"

"Exactly so. And, as we are leaving the town so soon, what do you say about our prowling about tomorrow, to give you an idea of the bally place, and to taking it in the evening in jinriksha? It's very picturesque, both by night and by day, and you'll not find me a poor guide, as I have knocked around considerably since I have been here."

The American fell in with this plan gratefully, and thought himself in good luck that he was about to have for a guide an Anglo-Saxon who knew the principal places of interest, and possessed a slight command of the language. Neville, he learned, had been in the country something over three months.

They were out bright and early the next morning and spent the entire day tramping about the fascinat-

ing streets of the Japanese city.

"Did you bring your camera with you?" Neville asked Hardy, as the latter appeared on the veranda of the hotel, where he found his new-made friend waiting. "There's a deal to photograph, and these people are certainly picturesque, even if they aren't much else."

"Will they allow one to take photographs?" asked Hardy.

"Oh, certainly. There are no restrictions whatever. Their civilization is imitative, you know, copied mostly from the English and American. They allow perfect freedom in such matters, simply because the Anglo-Saxons do. They are a nation of monkeys."

Hardy went back for his kodak.

"Neville seems to hate the Japanese," he mused, and the thought jarred, because he himself was most favourably impressed with the colour, the apparent lightness and gaiety, the exquisite politeness, the daintiness, the strangeness, of this land, which furnished him with that new world and those new scenes which he so much needed.

"If one wants a new, a different view," he sighed, "Japan is the place to get it. I wish I could stay here. But then, beggars can't be choosers. I suppose Siberia will be as great a change from

America as this place is."

The two men, as they walked away from the front steps to the Grand Hotel, presented, in their physical appearance, as great a contrast as possible: Neville, tall, large-boned, florid, blue-eyed, thick-liped; Hardy of medium size, dark, slight, well-knit and so erect that he seemed to be gazing constantly at the tops of the houses or the sky. His suit of dark grey fitted him with that unobtrusive elegance which proclaims the most expensive American tailors, while his gold-rimmed pince-nez, which he wore as unconsciously as though it were a very part of his features, added intellectual distinction to a high-bred, somewhat ascetic countenance.

"Did you ever see 'The Mikado,' by Gilbert and Sullivan, well staged?" he asked, after they had been out a couple of hours. "Well, that is Japan. It is a comic opera country, there is no better way

of describing it. The only feature lacking in the Gilbert and Sullivan version is the babies. How they do swarm about the streets, all exactly like their elders, except that they are smaller! They do not impress one as babies. They seem rather a diminutive race of the same people, as though the Japanese had treated human beings as they sometimes do trees—had dwarfed them by some artificial process."

"Yes, they breed like rats," growled Neville.

In the afternoon they walked down toward the seashore, the Englishman still acting as guide.

"That would make a fine view," suggested Neville.

"Those houses along the beach, that bit of sea and

the hills yonder."

"That is so," assented Hardy. "I believe I'll take it. If I'm not careful I shall get all my films covered with babies." He opened his camera and rolled out the bellows. Then he strolled back and forth for several moments, gazing into the finder, as he tried to decide upon the composition of the view which he would take. He pressed the bulb, and was closing the instrument when a Japanese in European dress stepped up to him and laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

"You must give me that camera, sir," said the Japanese, quietly, in perfect English. Hardy looked about in amazement. His first, very natural thought

was that he was being robbed.

"Don't try anything of that kind here," he replied, "my man, or I'll give you into the hands of the police."

The threat was suggested by the presence of two police officers who were standing near, evidently watching the scene. The Japanese now called to them in his own tongue, and they approached.

"I am an officer of the law," he said; "and you

will be taken into custody if you resist. I beg that you will not compel me to have the camera taken from you forcibly." Hardy rarely allowed himself to exhibit excitement.

"Better hand it to him," advised Neville. "He is evidently labouring under some mistake, which the authorities will be jolly well anxious to rectify."

Hardy handed over his camera.

"I'll go with you to the police station," he said.

"Do not put yourself to the trouble," said the Japanese. "The police will know where to find you when they want you. The instrument will be returned to you, when we are through with it, to the Grand Hotel."

"Well, I call that cool," said Hardy, as he stood watching the three men, who were walking off with his camera. I'll have that instrument back if I have to stay here a month and make an international affair of it. I wonder what they want with it?"

"I haven't the least idea," replied Neville. "Probably they have heard that some other country prohibits taking photographs. As I told you, they

are a nation of monkeys."

Mr. Hardy found his camera on his return to the hotel, with a note stating the films would be returned to him in the morning, developed. The incident, which had been conducted in a masterful manner, threw a new light upon Japan. It led him to believe that this was something more than a comic-opera country, and that the inhabitants were not all babies.

"The Anglo-Saxons are the only people who have any idea of personal liberty," remarked Hardy, as the two men stood on the steps of the hotel waiting for their jinriksha to arrive. "Fancy the authorities in New York or London, taking away

#### 16 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

your camera and developing the films, just to see what pictures you have taken. Well, I got my camera back all right, and I'm going to consider myself in luck, because I get my films developed free of charge. I wonder if there's anything else this obliging people would like to do for me before I go away?"

#### CHAPTER II

#### IN THE HANDS OF THE POLICE

A T this moment the jinriksha came up and the newly made friends started out for their night expedition about the streets of Yokohama—such an excursion as only Pierre Loti or Lafcadio Hearn can describe adequately. A European's chief sensation on first getting into a jinriksha is loss of dignity. There you sit, perched in a narrow, trim baby carriage, driving a barelegged little man with an inverted fish basket on his head.

"It must take months of sojourn here to make one realize that this is a sober, bonâ-fide mode of transportation," Hardy remarked to his companion. "I suppose it's as seriously regarded as the street car or the hansom cab in our own countries. I must say, though, that I feel as if I were at Coney Island, riding about in a goat wagon for a lark."

He glanced around sheepishly to see if anybody were looking at him, and was quite surprised to observe that nobody was paying the least attention in the world to him. Neville had lighted a cigar and was leaning luxuriously back with his thumbs in the armholes of his vest. Hardy did not lean back. He was sure that if he did the little manhorse would fly up into the air and oscillate at the end of his shafts like a monkey on a stick.

They trotted from place to place till midnight or after, Hardy enjoying himself hugely. He took away with him a confused memory of dark, narrow streets, swarming with Japanese, mostly babies; of occasional low buildings where something seemed

to be going on inside; of steep acclivities at which it was necessary to get out and walk; and of steep declivities where the man-horse leaned back at an angle of forty-five degrees and the muscles stood out on his legs in knots.

"I say," cried Hardy to Neville, "if this thing ever gets away from him I'll be in a pretty pickle."

"You'd travel to the bottom jolly fast!" laughed Neville, who did not seem to be in the least nervous.

There were innumerable paper lanterns, of course, and one quarter of the town was lighted as if for

a garden party.

They were sitting upon the floor in the back room of a tea house, listening to the music furnished by three geishas, when they were arrested. Hardy had felt it a privilege to go into this place, because his companion assured him that it was the real thing, and not one of those resorts which are run for foreigners. This statement was borne out by the fact that the dozen or more patrons whom they found there were natives, with the exception of one, a little foreigner who spoke bad English, and who, as Hardy remembered afterwards, sat offensively close to him. This man had a profuse, shapeless beard and bad teeth, and persisted in drawing Hardy and Neville into conversation. The American took a dislike to him from the first.

"Don't resist, don't resist," whispered Neville, as the four policemen stepped up to them. "It won't do you the least good in the world, don't you know? They've made some blooming mistake, and when they find out what it is they'll do everything in their power to make amends."

"I haven't the least idea in the world of resisting," replied Hardy good-naturedly; "this is really interesting. Whom do they take us for, I wonder?"

They were escorted to a cab, and whirled off to a large, modern-appearing building of stone, whose front was lighted by an electric globe. They walked up a broad flight of stairs and entered a room, in the centre of which a middle-aged Japanese, in the uniform of a general in the army, sat at a table writing. This was a corpulent man, in whose shrewd eyes and stern features European training contended with Mongol cunning. He spoke for a very few moments in a low tone with a subordinate and. evidently as a result of this conference, Neville was led from the room. He returned after about twenty minutes, and Hardy glanced at him curiously. If anything unpleasant had been done to him it did not show in his face, a fact which the American attributed to the other's British imperturbability.

Hardy was himself now led away. He was taken into a room about ten feet square, with bare floors and not an article of furniture. He found himself alone with two Japanese, one of whom addressed him immediately in a language which he did not

understand.

"I cannot speak Japanese," he replied; "if you wish to talk with me, you will have to find

some one who can speak English."

"I was not talking Japanese to you, as I think you know," replied his inquisitor, in absolutely perfect English. "You are too modest as to your really remarkable linguistic acquirements. But if it suits you to speak English at the present moment, I shall be most happy to oblige you. I am sorry to inform you that you must submit to being searched."

"Now, really, wouldn't that be carrying matters too far?" asked Hardy. "I had intended to take this thing good-naturedly, as it interests me; but searching me—I really think I shall enter a protest

against that. I am an American citizen, you know, and if any indignities are offered me I shall not fail to demand redress."

"Unfortunately, we have nothing to do with that feature of the case," replied the Japanese. "We are under orders, and we trust you will not put us to the disagreeable necessity of using force."

"Well, go ahead," said Hardy cheerfully; "and if you find anything out of the ordinary, I'll eat it."

They stepped briskly up to him and began to run their hands rapidly and deftly over his clothing, and through his pockets. As they worked, he talked:—

"If this had happened in Russia now, where every man is suspected of being an anarchist or spy, I shouldn't have wondered at it. But we Americans have begun to look upon you Japanese as civilized people. We call you the Yank—hello, what's that?"

They had taken from his overcoat pocket a bundle of papers, which they opened and began to examine under the electric bulb hanging from a wire in the centre of the room. Hardy stepped forward briskly, out of curiosity, but one of them threw out an arm as rigid as a bar of steel and pushed him back as easily as if he were a child. As nearly as he could tell from the distance thus maintained, the paper seemed to be covered with drawings and plans of some kind.

"I never saw that before," he exclaimed, much wondering. They went out together and left him in the middle of the room. Having nothing better to do, he lighted a cigarette, and attempted to study it all out, standing there with his hands in his pockets.

"I only hope they don't keep this farce up till I miss my train," he mused. "I have bought my ticket."

He was not kept waiting long. The general himself came in to see him.

"Of what am I accused?" asked Hardy, "and

why am I subject to these indignities?"

The general also spoke English. He had shrewd, fearless, penetrating eyes, and an absolutely dispassionate, business-like air.

"You cannot brazen the matter out," he replied.

"The papers found on your person leave little doubt as to the nature of your mission in this country."

"I should like to see those papers," said Hardy. "I cannot imagine what they are, that you should be interested in them. I didn't know that I had any papers in my overcoat pocket."

The general smiled.

"We shall be under the necessity of detaining you," he said, "and of examining you more at your leisure." He pushed a button in the wall. Two soldiers entered. "You will go with these men."

"But you are making some great mistake that will get you all into trouble. I am a well-known American citizen, now on my way to Russia. I arrived only this morning, direct from my country. I demand to be taken before the American consul, or, better, I will send for him."

The general lighted a cigarette and took a turn

about the room.

"You say you arrived this morning?" he asked. Hardy's earnestness was so great that it was almost convincing. Besides, the Japanese had no desire to alienate American sympathy.

"Come out into my office and wait awhile," he

said; "I will telephone to your consul."

Hardy found Neville still in the office, smoking a cigar and appearing quite cheerful in the circumstances.

"Oh, this is good of you to wait for me," said the American, sitting down.

"Couldn't help it, my dear fellow," replied

"They haven't let me go yet."

"But what do they suspect me of? What have I what have we done? Have you any idea what those papers were that they found in my overcoat pocket?"

"Not the least in the world, but I suspect. see, these people are simply spoiling for a fight with Russia. They talk and think of nothing else. Japan is a volcano of war sentiment that is ready to erupt at any moment. Consequently, they are suspicious of foreigners. They probably take you for a Frenchman or a Russian—a spy, in fact."

Neville spoke quite loud, so that it was possible for any of the officials standing near to hear him. Hardy admired his imperturbability. The consul soon arrived, a forceful man who understood his business. Hardy produced his passport, a card,

and several letters.

"I am on my way to Russia," he explained, "to take a place with the American Trading Company at Stretinsk. I have bought my ticket, and must get off in the morning."

The consul led him to one side.

"Those papers found on you are plans and specifications of the fortifications here," he whispered. "The authorities were rendered suspicious of you to-day through finding you in the act of photographing the harbour defences. They have developed your films and they find a very good picture of the forts and the approach to them by sea."

Hardy laughed.

"I do seem to be a deep and dark villain, don't I? Yet, I assure you, I was but taking an innocent view of the town.

23

"But how did you come by the plans and drawings?"

"I haven't the least idea in the world. I didn't

even know there were any fortifications here."

"I believe you," said the consul. "Somebody, hard pressed by the police, must have unloaded on you. What do you know about this—what's his name—who is with you? Where have you two been?"

"This man with me? Why, he's Neville, an Englishman. Everybody knows him, and all about him. He's a gentleman. We've been taking in the sights together in jin—by Jove, I have it! In that place where we were arrested there was a most offensive chap who insisted on rubbing up against me. His face was covered with whiskers. He was a Russian, of course. He's the man!"

The consul held a long conference with the general, and the latter with his subordinates. As a result, the two men were allowed to go, the Japanese so overwhelming them with courtesy upon their departure that Hardy, on the whole, was rather pleased than otherwise at his strange adventure.

"The bewhiskered gentleman at the café-chantant—or—whatever you call it, was the man who put the papers in my pocket," laughed Hardy to Neville, as he bade him good-night at the *Grand*. "But why doesn't he disguise himself? Anybody would know that he was a Russian—with those whiskers. If there ever was a man who looked the part, he's the one."

"Perhaps the whiskers are artificial," suggested Neville.

"Perhaps they were," mused Hardy. And that, too, seemed probable.

#### CHAPTER III

#### **AISOME**

THEY were off for Aomori, at the north end of Nippon, in the early morning, leaving Yokohama on a toy train that started at 6.45. All day they travelled through a country tilled like a garden, a country of vivid green with many brawling streams of water clear as crystal, and hillsides thickly wooded. The sky was darkly blue, reminding one of the excess of colour used sometimes by impressionist artists, and seemed ever low and near. Objects evidently close by appeared far off, an effect sometimes attained in skilful landscape gardening—or perhaps in fairy land. The frequent farmhouses were built of bamboo set on end and were thatched with straw.

As they climbed into the mountains the streams became more numerous, with pebbly beds and clean, high banks. Villages were frequent, and the hill-sides were dotted with small houses in clumps of trees. An occasional Buddhist temple was seen, as well as numerous tiny shrines to the Fox, the god of the rice fields. The valleys were cut up into square basins, flooded with water, and men, and women in masculine attire, were wading about in these, plying huge mattocks. These labourers wore straw hats shaped like inverted fish baskets. Babies were still prevalent; comical, fascinating little creatures, the females distinguished from the males by the obi, a sort of cushion fastened to the back, the universal mark of womanhood in Japan. In some cases it was an elaborate and beautifully

embroidered affair, evidently a matter of pride; while on the backs of many of the girls labouring in the rice fields it degenerated into a mere rag.

As Hardy and his companion gazed from the window, they were entertained by the running comment of their guide or dragoman, Masatsura Tsuchiya, whom they had picked up at Yokohama. This young Japanese had spent several years in New York, knew English, and was bright and officious to the verge of pertness.

When a Japanese merchant and a pretty young woman boarded the train about the middle of the day, it was Masatsura who acted as introducer and

apologist.

"This is a Japanese silk merchant," he explained, "and he is going with his daughter to Hakodate." If the honourable gentlemen do not object, he will bring his daughter in with us. I have explained to him that such is the custom in England and America."

"Bring her in, of course," said Hardy, rising and making one of his most graceful bows. "We shall be delighted to have the lady's society." This was translated to Mr. Sano, the merchant, who executed a series of supple obeisances, and to the daughter, who arose and curtsied demurely in Japanese style.

"She's quite an acquisition, eh, Neville?"

Hardy observed.

"By the way," turning to Masatsura, "do either of them speak English?"

"Not a word," replied the guide.

"She's positively beautiful, don't you think so,

Neville?" he inquired of the Englishman.

"No," replied the latter; "I can't say that I do. There's something sickening in their beastly yellow skin to me, and those slits of eyes, pitched at that angle, strike me as deformed, or, as the physicians would say, monstrous. All foreigners living in Japan regard the natives as an offensive, inferior lot, something as your Southerners look upon negroes. No, I can't get up any enthusiasm over

your Jap girl's beauty."

"Well, to me she's about the daintiest and most exquisite creation my eyes ever rested on," persisted the American. "If there's any yellow in her cheeks, it's a slight tinge of moonlight, or, perhaps, one might fancy a little gold dust mingled with the mortal clay of which she is made. She is as dainty as a March lilac blossom, her lips are as red as cherries, and the blood that shines through her cheeks, like—like firelight through a delicately stained window—is as warmly red as if she were Anglo-Saxon. I can understand now how foreigners, like Edwin Arnold, for instance, have married Japanese women. Is it true that they do not kiss? Such lips as those were intended by an all-wise and merciful Providence for kissing."

"You'd jolly well change all those ideas after you'd been here awhile," replied Neville. "You grow sick of yellow people after living with them. I'd as soon kiss a rat as a Japanese girl."

"Well," said Hardy, to whom the conversation was becoming distasteful, "it's not the thing to discuss a lady, even if we are in a foreign country and observing and discussing everything. I must insist, however, that I should weary of people like our little friend opposite, very, very slowly.

Hardy glanced at the girl as he said these words. She was looking past him out of the window, and a slightly uncomfortable feeling, that she must by instinct divine that they were talking about her, vanished from his mind. Her eyes, which were not

black exactly—for black is dead and lightless—were fixed with interest upon the moving panorama seen through the window, and she seemed entirely oblivious of the other occupants of the compartment. Masatsura and Mr. Sano were at the other end all this time, volubly discussing some subject or other in their own tongue.

At the next station an official of the railroad company entered with hot water and tea leaves. He put some of the leaves into the pot standing on the table, turned in the water and took his departure. After the tea had steeped a few moments, the girl poured it into cups and offered it to the men. Hardy decided that he had never seen a more modest and charming smile.

"Where does she get her exquisite breeding?" he asked Neville. "There's nothing exactly like it in our country. Our fashionable training-schools for girls would do well to import a few Japanese teachers."

"It isn't good manners," growled Neville, "It's servility. Give her a dollar and she'll get down and bump her head on the floor—kowtow to you."

An idea occurred to Hardy. Neville was so disagreeable, he would talk to Miss Sano. He proposed the matter to Masatsura, who informed him that the young lady would be incredibly honoured. Masatsura addressed a few words to her, and she smiled upon Hardy by way of assent and comprehension. He sat down by her, and Masatsura, standing before them, acted as interpreter. She was not the least bit embarrassed or silly. Her manner combined the most deferential interest with a quaint suggestion of roguishness. Once, during the progress of the conversation, she fished up from the depths of her voluminous pocket a package of

scented paper handkerchiefs, peeled one off and put the rest back. Then she wiped her nose with a few graceful, dainty dabs, and poked the handkerchief

out of the partly opened window.

Hardy asked her where she lived, if she had any brothers and sisters, if she enjoyed dancing, and gradually got to comparing notes with her as to the life of young girls in Japan and in America. At his suggestion Masatsura went out for something to eat at the next stop, and returned with some little boxes containing rice cooked to a paste, bits of chicken and preserved lily root. A pair of chopsticks was tied to each box, and the girl with much childish laughter taught him to use them, clapping her little hands approvingly when he at last succeeded in conveying a morsel of food to his mouth. By means of these chopstick lessons they arrived at a state of such mutual confidence that Hardy was able to dispense with the assistance of the guide. They got great amusement out of trying to make each other understand by means of signs. Hardy, for instance, wrote his name on a card, and pronounced it several times, pointing to himself. She understood and made great difficulty of repeating his name. She succeeded at last-almost; and the strange words sounded so funny to her that she laughed merrily. When night came on, Aisome, Ah-e-so-me, for so she was called, left the compartment for the women's quarters, and Hardy and Neville lay down upon the benches which ran around the sides of the car, like the seats in a Turkish house, instead of across it.

Before Aisome retired, she served the tea again, of which Neville drank copiously, which was another proof of his British extraction in Hardy's eyes.

They all slept soundly, but the American was

troubled with an unpleasant dream during the night.

"It amounted almost to a nightmare," he explained to Neville. "I thought that Aisome came in with two Japanese and they searched us as if we had been thieves. Aisome was still beautiful, but she did not look childish any mere. I was positively afraid of her in my dreams. The girl held the lantern, and spoke once or twice, sharp and quick, as if giving commands. Her eyes were hard and eager, like those of a ferret. I could feel the man's hand running rapidly over my person, going into my pockets, crumpling up my shirt. They opened the valises, and even felt in our shoes. Then they all stole out again, closing the sliding door noiselessly."

"The Japs are all thieves," replied Neville.

"Perhaps you were half awake. We'd better look

and see if anything has been taken."

Hardy's Englishman did not appear greatly perturbed, yet he went carefully through his pockets and his valise. Hardy followed his example, concluding, after he had finished:—

"It was a dream right enough. Had it been any-

thing else, I should have waked."

When Aisome came in later with her father, Hardy told her of the dream, with Masatsura's aid as interpreter. She pursed up her pretty mouth and opened her eyes in wonder, commenting:—

"That was a bad dream, but it is better to dream

bad things than to have them really happen."

Strangely enough, Aisome's face, as he had seen it by night, kept haunting him, and the features of that apparition became fused with the sweeter and more innocent features at which he was now gazing.

"Was it a dream, after all," he asked him-

self, "or was I partly waking?"

But he put the thought from him as preposterous.

# CHAPTER IV

#### ONE FOND KISS

THEY all took dinner together—Aisome, Mr. Sano, Neville and Hardy—at the Aomori restaurant. Neville objected strenuously to this arrangement.

"They aren't quite human, you know," he said. "Englishmen think they lose caste when they dine with coolies—and so they don't do it, don't you

know ? "

"Well, we shan't lose any caste by dining with this little woman," replied Hardy warmly, "any more than if we were to dine with the Queen of Fairyland. Personally, I shall feel honoured to sit at the same table with so much grace and beauty. We shan't need a bouquet with her there. Really, I consider her about as rare and exquisite a feminine creation as I have ever seen, and I shall think you mean to be disagreeable, if you do not show more respect for my feelings in the matter."

"Oh, all right!" growled Neville; but he could not help adding, "Most fellows feel as you do when

they first come to the bally country."

The girl stood a little behind her father, with her hands lost in her voluminous sleeves as in a muff, and her eyes cast modestly down. As the men talked she glanced up at them with the uncomprehending look of one who hears an unknown tongue. When the invitation to dine was explained to her, her eyes sought those of her father inquiringly. She nodded and smiled and clapped her hands gaily.

Together they entered the lower room of the restaurant, which was simply a large, barn-like compartment, floored with rough boards. At the foot of the stairway there were numerous pairs of slippers, of all shapes and sizes. Masatsura explained that they were requested to remove their shoes and select a pair of slippers each before ascending to the dining-rooms. Aisome and her father, of course, required no direction on this point. Hardy, as soon as he understood, sat down upon the stair and commenced to take off his shoes. By good fortune, he found himself sitting side by side with Aisome. He had positively, he thought, never seen anything so dainty as her little foot. In its yellow silk stocking, it reminded him of the petal of some flower. She had great difficulty in finding a slipper small enough, and there were none large enough for Hardy, who managed, however, to stick his toes into a pair too small for him. He pointed to her feet and then to his own and measured off in the air two lengths, exaggerating the largeness of his own foot and the smallness of hers. laughed, and he experienced a feeling of comradeship with this tiny creature with whom he could not talk a word, as if she were, in fact, "a good fellow."

They all started up the steps together, but Neville was detained. He had refused to take

off his shoes.

"But, sir, it is the custom of the country," explained Magazana deformatically

plained Masatsura deferentially.

"I didn't come over here to learn the blooming manners," replied Neville; "I brought mine with me."

"Better take 'em off, old man," protested Hardy, who was trying to be civil, but had begun to weary of his companion. "They may think it positively indecent to go into a dining-room with the shoes on."

After some opposition, on the ground that it made him feel like a fool to go about in his stocking feet, Neville removed his shoes and started up the stairs with them in his hand.

"Better bring your shoes too," he explained to Hardy. "They'll probably steal them if you leave them down there."

They all squatted about a low table, whose legs were not over a foot high, and waited for dinner. Their room, which had been enlarged to suit the size of the party by simply removing a partition, looked out upon a court. Diners in other rooms on the opposite side of the court could be seen, also squatting about tables. In less than five minutes Hardy had become most uncomfortable, but Aisome and her father sat there upon their toes as easily as if they were reclining upon couches. They had ordered of the pretty girl waiter who came to serve them, and waited perhaps fifteen minutes, when "Where are my shoes?" in Neville exclaimed, such a tone that Aisome looked up inquiringly, and her father evidently asked Masatsura what the trouble was.

"The waiter took them out to have them blacked," explained the guide. "She will either bring them back or else leave them down there with the others."

It was necessary to hurry through dinner somewhat, as the *Teijo Maru* sailed at three, and there was not much time.

Neville spoke about his shoes two or three times, insistently, and they were brought back to him in a few moments. He kept them thereafter close at his side, his eyes upon them.

When the two foreigners left for the boat, Hardy

made a pretty parting speech to Aisome, which Masatsura translated.

At the wharf he was arrested again. He was thoroughly disgusted, and threatened to make trouble, but, to tell the truth, his rage was somewhat mollified by the fact that he might see Aisome again, and that he would be compelled to pass a week or so longer in the Englishman's company. Nevertheless, he said to him upon parting, "If this thing keeps on, I shall begin to share your opinion of the Japanese."

Hardy was clapped into a room overlooking the sea, from the window of which he could see the Teijo Maru, steaming out into the purple distance. An elaborate and dainty dinner was brought to him in the evening, and about ten that night he was escorted to the wharf again. A tiny figure, muffled in a cloak, was waiting there, and the others stepped

aside as this person approached.

"I hope you are not vexed with me," said a familiar voice in the well-modulated accents of an educated woman.

"Aisome!" cried Hardy.

"Yes, Aisome:"

"But-but you speak English."

"Yes, I am a graduate of Vassar College and now in the service of my country. Listen—I have only a moment, and I feel that I would like to make you an explanation. Your companion was a Russian spy. The plans of the forts, on oiled paper, were found between the soles of his right shoe. It was he, no doubt, who put the copy of them in your pocket, having learned that he was under suspicion and would soon be arrested. It was he, I am sure, who entrapped you into taking a photograph of the forts. You are under suspicion, and would

have been in terrible danger had you gone with him. You will sail now on another ship, and will be safe."

"He will be in danger!" said Hardy, mystified.

"What sort of danger?"

"Did I say that he would be in danger?" asked Aisome sweetly. "No; I said that you would have been in danger. We have taken the plans of the forts away from him, but he still has them in his head—and—perhaps you have, but I do not think so—a man who could speak so beautifully about a woman!"

"But why are you doing all this for me?" asked

Hardy.

"Why? Because I am a woman, I suppose. Because you have said there is moonlight in my cheeks, that my lips are ripe cherries, that I am made of gold dust, that I am a Queen of Fairyland. I am known as 'The Fox,' but I have a woman's silly heart and cannot resist flattery." There was something elfin in her beauty as she stood there with her face raised to his in the moonlight. "Old Sano says that my head is turned," she sighed, "but it is easy to wheedle him."

"Sano? He is not your father, then?"

"No, he is my superior in the secret service. And now good-bye; you—you may kiss me once, if you really meant what you said. It will be the only kiss of my life, as it is not the custom of my country."

She raised her lips to him and he stooped and kissed her. The lips were dewy and very sweet, and he was conscious of some subtle perfume, as if she were herself some rare and exquisite flower.

"Good-bye," she whispered, "and think some-

times of the little Lilac Blossom!"

She turned and was gone, and he stepped into the boat waiting to take him out to his ship.

### CHAPTER V

### THE "SHIKOKU MARU"

THE crew of the Shikoku Maru consisted of five persons—the captain, the engineer, and three sailors. They were the first filthy, unkempt Japanese that Hardy had seen. One of them, a shock-headed boy, who seemed to have brought to sea with him all the smells of Chinatown, came and stood by the American's side and gazed into his face with insatiable, devouring curiosity. was watching the twinkling lights of the town and thinking of Aisome, with whom he had been thrown so brief a time, yet who had played such a large part in his life, and left such an indelible impression upon his memory. Yes, he had known her but two days, yet he would carry away a more vivid recollection of her than of many other people with whom he had been associated for years. wondered if she were really in love with him, or only touched by the compliments he had paid her, and which in the circumstances she could not help knowing were sincere.

"Women are the same the world over," he soliloquized, "they like flattery. Different races are distinguished by yellow and red and white and black skins, but there are no race characteristics to mark the feminine heart. Yet, when I say 'flattery,' I am perhaps doing an injustice, for it was the evident sincerity of the compliments I paid her which

made such an impression on Aisome.

The light grew dimmer. He was indeed leaving behind the teeming millions of Japan, with its hates and its loves, its traditions, its policy, its statesmen, its noblemen and its beggars, its sorrows and its joys, its hopes and its heartaches. He took a deep

breath of the sea wind and sighed.

"Old Emery was right," he mused, "the thing for me to do was to get away and begin again. One's own grief seems small when one sees how big the world is, when one comes to realize that his particular ache is only a drop in the great ocean of human misery. I shall probably never in my life meet another person who has heard of Margaret Manners, and her-her fickleness."

He called her Margaret Manners, but the thought that she was even now Margaret Sunderland gave him a wrench.

But he had already reached the stage when one realizes that he is grieving after something that has never existed: in this case the idealized and not the actual Margaret, and he was therefore far on the road towards forgetfulness and recovery. He felt uncomfortable now and, looking up, noticed that the Japanese boy was still standing by his side, staring at him. He wanted to be alone.

"Go 'way," he said, "take yourself off!" boy did not move. Hardy pointed and made a gesture that could not be misunderstood. The boy retreated a step and scowled angrily. Hardy seized him by the shoulder and gave him a push.

"Get on about your business!" he commanded;

"you annoy me.'

The boy's fists doubled and his lips flew back from his teeth. He took a step forward threateningly, and looked the American impudently in the eye. Then, muttering angrily, he turned and walked away.

"They're a spunky race, if they are all like that fellow," thought Hardy. "Perhaps, if I had remained longer in Japan I should have amended my first impressions of the country. They are spoiling for a war with Russia, eh? Well, Russia will eat them up, and it's a pity, for they are certainly the most picturesque people on the face of the globe."

The lights grew fewer, fading in the distance one

by one.

"It might be as well," mused Hardy, "to make myself as agreeable as possible to these Japs. I am alone with them in the middle of the sea, and I heard rumours in Yokohama that, despite their exquisite politeness, they hate all Caucasians. Perhaps Aisome—but no, she certainly was sincere. I wonder where Neville is now?" The American felt in his hip pocket and was comforted by the cold touch of his revolver handle. The reflection that he was one of the most famous amateur shots in America gave him a distinct feeling of security. He was conscious of a sense of danger—he could not tell why—which he could not quite satisfy by the reflection that such a feeling was natural to a man situated as he found himself at the present moment.

The lights were all gone now. That one yonder, at which he had been gazing so long and which did not fade, was a star, he was quite sure. He turned and walked forward to where the captain was talking with one of the sailors, and indicated, by laying his cheek upon his open palm, that he was sleepy and would like to go to bed. The captain, with sudden comprehension and many exaggerated gestures of politeness led him to a hatch and raised the door. Hardy saw a ladder and as much of the dark, roomy hold as a lantern hanging from a beam could illuminate. The captain went down the ladder and Hardy

followed. Had he been able to speak Japanese, or to make himself in any way understood, he would have objected to sleeping below, would have explained that he preferred to wrap himself in a blanket and remain on deck, where the air was purer. But he remembered his experience with the boy, and did not think it best further to antagonize these men, in whose power he so completely was.

The captain took down the lantern and opened the door. The cabin into which he led the way was nearly semi-circular in shape, as it was bounded by a partition across the hull and the walls of the ship's stern. A cushioned divan extended in a semicircle around the rear end; there was a carpet on the floor and furniture in the form of a couple of chairs and a table, over which was swung a dining rack. The captain made an inclusive, hospitable gesture, accompanied by a low salaam. Hardy's mind was relieved.

"They evidently think they are giving me the best they have," he concluded. "I was a little rough with the boy up there, but I never could endure being stared at. A spirited American boy would have acted as he did."

He regretted now his fleeting distrust of Aisome, whose dewy kiss and the faint, flower-like fragrance of whose hair lingered with him as a memory of exquisite daintiness.

The captain said something that sounded like

"yukkuri," closed the door and was gone.

"I'm not going to be very comfortable here," thought Hardy, as he sat down upon the upholstered divan. He was directly over the screw, which shook the little vessel at this point as though it would shake it into pieces. The stern, too, had an unpleasant way of rising high out of the water, causing Hardy

for the moment to feel as though he were dropping from a far height. He took considerable pride in the fact that he was not sea-sick.

"I—I've done too much sailing on my own yacht to let a little thing like this knock me out," he muttered, "but I'd like to see Johnny Farjeon here!"

Farjeon's extraordinary capacity for sea-sickness had always been a source of amusement to Hardy.

The divan looked comfortable, so Hardy lay down upon it and composed himself for sleep. He woke up about an hour later upon the floor. The wind was rising, and the increased plunging of the boat had rolled him from his couch.

He spread his blankets upon the floor and lay down upon them, where he soon became aware, as he was now thoroughly awake, that the cabin was filled with a sickening odour, reminding him, as had the proximity of the curious boy above, of the smells of Chinatown. The stern of the ship was going up and down like a child's see-saw, only it attained prodigious heights and depths. rose out of the water, the screw whirred viciously and vainly in the air, shaking the cabin as a terrier shakes a rat. Hardy remembered that this was an emigrant ship, used for carrying Japanese and Korean labourers across to Russia. The hold, he had noticed by the light cast by the lantern, was fitted up with rows and rows of wooden bunks, placed one above the other.

"Whew!" he exclaimed, "that horrible smell oozes in through the partition. Such an odour would make me sick on solid land."

He had too much pride in his seamanship to admit that the motion had anything to do with his nausea.

"I must have air," he muttered, "fresh air."

There was a porthole on either side of the cabin, and to one of these he scrambled up; with considerable difficulty he managed to turn the screw and to throw open the circular glass window. The sweet breath of the sea immediately came whistling in, and he held his face for some minutes to the window, taking long deep draughts of it. The moon was shining, and he could see a vast expanse of tumbled waters, black as ink. One moment he was looking at them from an apparently great height, and the next the long swash of the waves washed the side of the hull but a foot or two below the porthole. He climbed down.

"That has blown the smell out of here already," he muttered. "I'll warrant this place hasn't been ventilated before for years. Now for some sleep."

ventilated before for years. Now for some sleep."
He lay down again upon the blankets and soon dozed off. He was awakened a second time by a cold stream of water spouting full upon him with terrible force. He jumped to his feet, only to be thrown sprawling. The little vessel, which was light, was rolling from rail to rail, and the water had coughed in through the opened porthole. A sudden fear that the ship would founder, and that he would be drowned, cooped up there in the cabin, seized him, and he leapt, clambering, for the porthole. It was now above him, but ere he reached it it was below him, and he was thrown toward it, receiving a second waterspout full in the face, drenching him to the skin. But he was as active as a monkey, and succeeded in thrusting an arm through the opening. He hung on with a will, and as his side of the vessel hove into the air again, he slammed the window to and gave a few frantic whirls to the screw, sufficient to make it catch and form a solid object to which

he could hold. He secured the window and rolled to the floor, where he rested upon hands and knees, with his limbs spread out as widely as possible to keep himself from rolling about, while he took stock of the situation. Enough water had come in to drench him thoroughly and to wet his blankets and baggage, but not sufficient to more than dampen the floor of the hold.

"Whew!" he exclaimed. "That was a narrow escape. I might very easily have sunk the ship by that means! I closed that porthole in the nick of time."

He concluded, as it was no longer practicable to have fresh air, to go above. Now that the porthole was closed, the sickening odour from the emigrants' quarters immediately made itself manifest.

"There isn't wind enough in heaven to blow that

smell away for good," concluded Hardy.

He crawled to the door and tried to open it, but, to his surprise, found it locked. He pounded upon it and shouted, but to no avail. This discovery aroused in him again the sense of danger, and the face of Aisome, as he had seen it in his dream upon the railway, took shape before the eyes of his memory. Seizing the knob of the door, he threw his entire weight against it several times, with the intention of breaking it in, but, to his surprise, it offered unexpected resistance. As he stood thus, still holding to the knob and wondering why he had been made a prisoner, there was a horrible, grinding, grating sound; the ship shuddered as though wounded to the death, and the stern uplifted high into the air and remained thus. Hardy knew this from the fact that he was now almost lying upon the floor, against which a moment ago he had been leaning. The grinding continued, accompanied by bumps and

# THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

slidings, giving him very much the same sensation that he had once experienced in a building that was being shaken by earthquake. The waves, over which she had been but a moment ago leaping with long, free strides, pounded against her with terrible and angry violence.

"My God," gasped Hardy, "we have run upon a rock and I shall be drowned here like a rat in a hole, if they do not let me out! Open this door! Hello! Hello! Open I say!"

#### CHAPTER VI

#### THE SHIPWRECK

**HE** ship had evidently ridden partly over the rock or reef upon which it was perched, and was resting at an angle with nose downward. This was fortunate, because it precluded any immediate danger of drowning. Hardy's position was uncomfortable in that there was not a level surface in the entire room for him to rest upon. Man, inferior in this respect to a cat or a fly or a worm, becomes next to helpless when his standing ground is tilted. He can climb a mountain, it is true, but even the crevices into which he digs his toes are tiny plateaux, by which he mounts from one to the next above. Let but one step be missing and he can go no farther up his mountain, either physical, moral or mental. Here was Hardy, tumbled like a bag of wheat into the angle formed by the tilted floor and the wall. The table was screwed to the floor, and by throwing himself lengthwise and extending his arms he could grasp one leg.

He pulled himself to the table and, holding to one of its legs, sat in the middle of the floor, and thought and listened. The ability to think in a trying situation, the attempt to make mind superior to matter, is the surest evidence of courage. That he could not beat in the door with his feet or by throwing his body against it, he had already learned,

### THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

and it soon became evident to him that there was little to be gained by shouting. The Japanese who had locked him there would not be likely to come to his assistance, even if they could hear him. They would have their own skins to look after, and, besides, had their intentions been friendly, they would not have imprisoned him. No, he was the victim of treachery; he was in the hands of men who regarded him as a spy and who had been instructed to dispose of him. The malignancy of the boy was now explained. He thought of Aisome, and muttered, "If I get out of this, I will never trust another woman so long as I live."

Moreover, shouting would have done small good, had he been on his own yacht. The wind was humming without, and the low, slow moan of the open sea, pitched on the note of a bumble-bee, yet suggestive of loneliness, vastness and solitude. The pounding of the waves, the hissing and splashing of the waters, the creaking of timbers, and rattling of things falling and tumbling about, made a din through which no human voice could hope to penetrate. Every moment some great wave put its shoulder under the stern and lifted it a trifle, at which the ship would lurch forward with that dreadful grating sound which could be felt rather than heard.

"She will soon pound to pieces," thought Hardy, who well knew the power of the waves; "she can't live long in this sea." He was conscious in every molecule of his brain and every fibre of his being that he wanted to live and have another try at life. All the ennui, the disgust, the supposed disillusionment, were gone when they were thus put to the test.

"If she smashes up," he reflected, "I shall

have no more chance than a chicken in an egg that is hit with a hammer. But she may not go to pieces immediately. Ships have been known to hang on for days."

Every time she lurched he was thrown so violently forward that it required all his strength to hold to the table leg. He must have remained in this position for an hour, an eternity it seemed to him, of mingled fear and hope, for the fact that the vessel did not immediately go to pieces led him to entertain the cheerful idea that perhaps she would hold out. He remembered a wreck off the coast of Massachusetts that had remained for months upon the rocks, defying wind and waves.

There was at last a more violent upheaval than any before; the ship plunged and settled, leaving the cabin floor nearly level. Hardy sprang to his feet

"She has either broken her back," he cried, "or has gone over the reef and settled in the shallows!"

She listed to port, and rocked gently from side to side, rendering it impossible for him to stand without holding to something. And now the water, which had been pouring into the forward part of the hold, came seething in from beneath and around the door and through the cracks of the partition. Every time the ship listed to starboard it reached a tiny knothole and spouted for several feet in a hissing stream.

"She has settled on the bottom," muttered Hardy. "She will hold now, she will hold! The water can't possibly rise high enough to drown me. I will climb on the table, on the divan."

It rose to his ankles, to his knees, and he got upon the table and sat there, holding to the edges. The wind began to subside somewhat, and he could hear the ghostly, unearthly noises made by the wreck itself; moanings and groanings, creakings, knockings, mutterings, whisperings, the gurgle and seething of the water as it rushed in and out with

the rhythmical listing of the ship.
At last the grey of early dawn began to peep in at the portholes, and he could see that they were high and dry above the level of the ocean. Four rats were swimming about in the cabin, their bewhiskered noses thrust above the water, a look of fright and comradeship almost human in their twinkling little eyes. They made triangular waves as they circled about the table and looked up at him. Once, when a considerable area of the divan rose clear through a greater list than usual, one of them started for the spot, quickly followed by the others, side by side. They all scrambled up and huddled together, but were soon washed off when the ship pitched again to starboard.

Hardy got down from the table and waded over toward the porthole. The rats swam to him, and he looked about for something with which to beat them off, as he remembered that rats, when cornered, will attack a man. But these had no intention of biting, though they came so close that they even bumped their noses against his legs.

He climbed to the porthole, opened it and looked out. The early sun was gleaming redly on a sullen, heaving sea. The waves were whitening over a long reef. Perhaps if he could secure something in the shape of a stick or pole that he could poke out of the window with his shirt tied to it—he looked about, and, to his surprise, dicovered that the door was partly open. He jumped down and waded to it, thinking for the moment that the

Japanese had come to release him. He pushed the door open and gazed into the dim hold, where the planks from the berths and mattresses were floating about.

He gained the ladder and mounted; he stood upon the deck. There was no sign of a living soul. Evidently the Japanese had gone off and left him to his fate. The door, he had no doubt, had been jammed open by the straining and plunging of the ship. There was land in the distance, a faint coast-line which he knew could not be that of Russia, as the Shikoku Maru had been out but a few hours when she struck. Hardy remained on the wreck till nearly noon. He had about made up his mind, should the crew return, to let them get aboard, pick them off with his revolver and take to the sea with their boat, when he discovered a steamer approaching. He signalled her, and she sent a small boat that took him off. She was a Russian steamer, bound for Vladivostok.

### CHAPTER VII

# THE "TEIJO MARU"

THE Teijo Maru, upon which Stapleton Neville started out, as he supposed, for Vladivostok, was a somewhat larger ship than the Shikoku Maru. She was cleaner, and the crew, which contained several more men, were more careful of their personal appearance. In every way the vessel gave evidence of being under more efficient management than the other. The truth is, of course, that she had been subsidized by the Japanese Government.

Neville, as we know, got away about three o'clock in the afternoon, and he passed the first two hours of his journey reclining easily upon the deck in a steamer-chair, watching the hills of Japan, wreathed in a blue mist, sink slowly into the bluer sea.

He was in a happy frame of mind, was Boris Romanoff, alias Stapleton Neville. His cigar was excellent, and he was cheered by the reflection that he had successfully carried through an extremely shrewd bit of business. He chuckled now as he thought of it. He could tell the Emperor, for instance, that the Japanese were actually going to fight. The entire people were united to a man, to a woman, to a baby, in hatred of Russia; the spirit of the nation was heated to the boiling point, ready to bubble over and overflow at any moment. Nothing but war was talked of in the tea-houses, on the streets. It would be difficult to pacify this mad

populace, bent upon their own destruction, should the rulers wish to do so. But there was evidently no intention of pacifying them. Preparations for a stern conflict were going on rapidly, steadily; in the drilling and arming of troops, the amassing of stores and munitions, the fitting out of battleships, the strengthening of fortifications. Those who had the fate of the nation in charge manifestly shared the popular opinion that self-preservation demanded a death grapple with that giant neighbour, Russia. The old samurai spirit was aroused, and dominated the entire nation—that glories in death upon the battlefield, or even in harakiri, that dishonour may be wiped out. "Banzai! Banzai!" The dandies in the teahouses, the merchants at their counters, the labourers in the rice fields, the harlots in their iron cages, were all muttering "Banzai! Banzai!"

Romanoff would advise that serious preparations be made to meet this coming onslaught, which could no longer be avoided by lying promises, nor be put off by diplomacy. The Japanese would actually fight. They would even attack with large and fanatic armies, well equipped, and with modern battleships efficiently managed. Romanoff had got out of the country with much valuable information, and with plans of various fortifications and the location of batteries, safely, as he thought, nailed between the soles of his shoes.

"It was a tight squeeze there at the end," he chuckled, lighting another excellent cigar, "but my amiable American friend helped me out just at the critical moment. Oh, well! He won't take it so hard. He can amuse himself with the coolie maiden who made such an impression on his susceptible heart. He will probably thank me for leaving him in her society."

Over toward Russia the sun was setting, a disk of two shades of red that divided it in exact halves, vermilion above and carmine below. Romanoff was not a great admirer of the beauties of nature. but this sight was so oddly beautiful, and he was so contented with himself that he sat gazing at it for some time, and actually enjoying it. As he looked, the carmine crept slowly upward, covering the vermilion, until at last the entire orb was of the former colour, and so well timed was the spectacle. as though it were being managed by some great scenic artist for the delectation of invisible spectators, that the disk sank into the deep blue of the sea and disappeared just at the moment when the transformation was complete. And now the curtain of night was falling. Romanoff gazed about him. looked toward Japan to see if that hated country had faded into twilight and the distance. To his surprise, the coast seemed even nearer than when he had last turned his eyes toward it. The vessel was evidently heading northward, along the shores of Ezo.

"Now what can this mean?" he asked himself. "It isn't possible that they have mistaken their course. The scoundrels know these waters too well. Maybe they are going to touch at some port up here before going across. Well, it will only make a difference of half a day or so. I suppose I'll have to stand it. Even two or three days will not make any particular difference to me."

He lit a third cigar, and settled back, determined to accept the situation with stolid Russian patience. But somehow as he sat and smoked, a faint suspicion took shape in his mind, that grew stronger

till it resulted in uneasiness.

"Can there be any trickery here?" he reasoned. "I believe I'll speak to the captain—a few words

of very bad Japanese, and pretend that I can hardly understand what he answers."

He arose and started forward to carry out this resolve, but stopped and reflected, leaning over the rail.

"It may be much to my advantage," he concluded, "to let them think that I do not understand their jargon at all. Perhaps by listening I may learn the truth. They are all liars."

He strolled forward to where the mate and one other, evidently not a member of the crew, were conversing. He passed quite close and they lowered their voices.

"Be careful," he heard the mate say. "He may

understand Japanese."

"Not a word," replied the other, "not a word. He has never been heard to utter more than two or three words of our tongue, and those only such as all foreigners learn. Even those were horribly mispronounced."

Romanoff leaned against the rail again, and gazed

down into the water.

"Oh, well," said the mate, "it wouldn't make much difference if he did overhear us. He couldn't do anything to help himself. But probably you are right. He could not have learned Japanese in the few months he has been in this country."

"I am sorry," said the other, "that war is not actually in progress, that he might have been hanged, and good riddance to him, the vermin! That's the proper thing to do with a spy: put a rope about his neck and jerk him up. How do you suppose the devils of Russians would treat a Japanese spy caught in their country?"
"They would give him a short shrift," replied

the captain. "Yet you must not forget that we

are going to show the world that we are a civilized nation, while Russia is not. After all, there are worse things than death. Being locked up in a dungeon, with no communication with the civilized world for months, perhaps years, is not the pleasantest thing in the world."

"Years?" said the other. "He will be released as soon as the war is over, and the victorious armies of the Mikado will be in St. Petersburg within six months. Why not pitch him overboard tonight and say that he jumped and tried to swim ashore, or that he was washed overboard and drowned? The devil might escape, you know. Twould be a patriotic act to rid the earth of him."

Romanoff's cigar had gone out. He walked up to the men and by gestures indicated that he would like a match.

"You are right," said the mate, scratching a match and lighting the Russian's cigar with much show of politeness. "The stupid pig doesn't know a word of our tongue."

Romanoff returned to his chair. It required all of his self-control to maintain his air of indifference. He glanced furtively about and felt in his inside coat pocket, where he grasped the handle of a sheath-knife—his only weapon. He was a great believer in the knife at close quarters. It made no noise, and it never missed fire. He had purposely avoided the carrying of a revolver in Japan, as he knew that the firing of one, in case of a row, would have brought the police down upon him immediately. What should he now do?

"If they try to throw me overboard," he decided, "there'll be two or three Japanese before I go. It's possible that this secret service man knows the jiu-jitsu. I'll get about three inches of cold

steel into him before he has a chance to try any of his monkey tricks. If they take me off in a boat it is not likely that more than two or three of them will come along. But they will probably be armed with revolvers."

He cast a glance at the shore and studied the distance critically. By the light of the rising moon, it did not seem more than two miles off. Besides, between the land and the ship were several miles of tiny islands, mere projecting rocks, where a man might rest. He was consumed with rage, and, strangely enough, his hate turned upon Hardy, whom he had not victimized after all.

"These vermin know their friends," he muttered. "Doubtless even now that little dandy and his courtesan are laughing at me. If I had him in Holy Russia I would have fun with him."

He glanced again at the shore. They would soon be passing an island or a projecting rock not more than half a mile distant. Something that the two Japanese had said put an idea into Romanoff's head —caused him to take a sudden resolve. He was sitting in the narrow passage way between the cabins and the rail, and there was no one in sight. He quickly cut his handkerchief into stripes and made a string. Then he sliced off the tap of his right shoe and tied it about his neck, dropping it inside his undershirt. He did the same thing with his knife, sheath and all. A moment later he had divested himself of his clothing, with the exception of his undergarments. Making the sign of the cross, and praying, "Mother of Christ, into thy hands I commit myself," he dropped over the side into the water, feet on. He scarcely made a ripple. When he came up and shook his head clear of water, the black hull of the ship was already several yards

# 54 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

distant, moving rapidly away. Her churning wake troubled him for an instant, and he swallowed a little sea water. But he filled his lungs with the joy of a perfect swimmer and rolled far over upon his right side. Dipping his cheek beneath the water, he took four long easy strokes. Raising his head, he blew like a porpoise, and filled his lungs again. His powerful left arm, curved like a hook, rose and fell noiselessly and pulled him through the sea.

#### CHAPTER VIII

#### DEATH OF MR. NOMURA

THE distance was greater than Romanoff supposed and long ere he reached the rock he began to feel a trifle weary. He did not allow the strength of his arms to become entirely exhausted, but turned over on his back occasionally to rest. Had he lost his head and wasted his powers in violent struggles, he would soon have drowned. Coolness and courage and the sternness of his purpose saved him, and he at last came to the sheer edge of a cliff, shining whitely in the rays of the moon. He swam around it, and on the shoreward side found a sloping projection upon which he climbed and lay down, thoroughly exhausted, after a noble swim of two miles. He was drenched to the skin, of course, but the night was warm, and he did not feel cold. He must have fallen into a doze and have slept for about an hour, when he awoke with a start to see a Japanese, whom he recognized as one of the sailors of the Teijo Maru, standing over him with a revolver pointed at his head, while another was beaching the prow of a He sprang erect, every faculty on the alert, and fumbled for his knife.

"Stop!" commanded the Japanese, "make but the least move and I'll shoot!"

"I seem to be in your power again, curse you!" said Romanoff, noticing with satisfaction that his

adversaries were but two. "What do you want me to do?"

"Ah, he speaks Japanese like a native!" cried the mate, for it was none other; "you will come with us, of course, and I warn you again that the least suspicious move will result in your instant death."

"I will come," replied Romanoff, "since there is nothing else for me to do."

He stepped down to the dory and took a seat in the stern, the mate sitting beside him. The other Japanese shoved off, seized the oars and headed for shore, now about half a mile distant.

"May I ask what you are going to do with me?" asked Romanoff. "You will readily understand that my curiosity is natural. Here is an opportunity to display that politeness for which your nation is so famous, and which, up to the present time, I have failed to experience or observe."

"We are going to take you on shore and lock you up in a dungeon, where you will be kept until the victorious armies of the Mikado enter St. Peters-

burg."

"Life imprisonment, eh? But you are most merciful, without intending to be, for three months after you little madmen have declared war upon Holy Russia, Japan will be a province of the Czar and I shall be set free. I shall ask, as a special reward for my services, that you two be given fifty blows of the knout each and set to work in chains breaking rock on my estate near Moscow."

"For that speech," said the mate, "I am going to bind your hands, that you may give us less trouble on shore. I had in my mind to kill you, as your ugly disposition gives every excuse for doing, but I think I will let you live to witness the degradation

of your country. Nomura, hand me that rope in the prow, and get your revolver ready to shoot him if he resists."

"Here is the rope," said Nomura. The mate leaned forward a trifle to take it, but that careless move cost him his life, for Romanoff jerked his knife from his shirt and plunged it to the hilt beneath the mate's arm. In the same breath he set his foot against the side of the little craft, and throwing the whole weight of his body into the effort, upset the dory. As he plunged beneath the waves Nomura's revolver exploded vainly in the air. Romanoff swam a little distance away, when another shot rang out, and he was stung by the impact of the bullet that struck the water above his body, and glanced, humming off into the night. He looked back at the overturned boat, and saw that his enemy was clinging to it.

"He can't swim," he reflected; or he would hardly hang there. I may as well strike out for

shore. He'll be almost sure to drown."

Putting the knife between his teeth, he took several strokes, when the Jap shot again, missing

his head by an inch or two.

"He's a cool beast, for one in his fix," thought Romanoff, grabbing the knife and diving. "He is taking deliberate aim, but can hardly hit me in this light, with the boat pitching like that."

He came up again at a greater distance, and

again the Jap shot, missing by several feet.

"Four!" said Romanoff, grimly. "There is only one more cartridge in his revolver. If he misses with that one, he will be at my mercy."

Rolling over upon his back, he floated, with but his nose above the water. Occasionally he splashed a little with feet or hands, to tempt the Jap to shoot. Several minutes passed thus, when Romanoff heard a slight rippling sound, and looking, he noticed a dark object approaching him rapidly through the water. It was the head of the Japanese.

"He can swim after all!" gasped Romanoff, and he struck out for the shore. It was a race for life, for if the Japanese were allowed too near he would be able to hit the Russian. But the race did not last long, for Nomura was but an ordinary swimmer, while Romanoff! was one of those men who take as naturally to the water as a Newfoundland dog. Another shot rang out, and he turned leisurely about and looked. He had increased the distance between his adversary and himself, who was now trying to regain the overturned boat, which, floating toward the shore, had come nearer to him. He succeeded, and throwing his arms over it, waited. Romanoff came up to the other side, and, resting upon it, the two men gazed into each other's eyes.

"You are about to die, Mr. Nomura," said

Romanoff, with a smile.

"I ask no mercy from a pig," replied Nomura, spitting on him. "My death will be revenged a

thousand times on you and yours."

"I will rest here awhile before I kill you," said Romanoff, "if you will kindly share your support with me; then I will swim ashore. You have learned a valuable lesson in warfare, namely, that the knife is a surer weapon at close quarters than the revolver. It is a pity that learning this lesson by experience prevents your making use of it."

"My countrymen will hold the feast of lanterns in Moscow and Petersburg," said Nomura, "and they will make geishas of your harlot sisters, and your harlot mother will serve them with wine."

Romanoff slashed at one of his hands with the

knife, but Nomura was too quick for him, and jerked

the hand away.

"Take my dying curse," he said. "My ancestors wait for me," and slipped beneath the water. Romanoff waited for a few moments to see if the Japanese would appear again, and then swam leisurely to shore. The only building at the exact spot of his landing was a white Shinto temple, roofed with thatch, but at some distance, on a sloping hill-side, was a small fisher village. As before, Romanoff lay down to sleep.

"Here I am," he reflected, "a Russian in a suit of underclothes. The ship will probably send in another boat to find out what has become of the first one, and a hue and cry will be raised against me. I must decide upon some course of action. I rely upon the aid of St. Nicholas and the Virgin,

who have been with me thus far."

### CHAPTER IX

## ADRIFT IN AN OPEN BOAT

ROMANOFF'S first thought was to steal down to the fisher village under cover of derivative to appropriate the first available boat he could get hold of, and to put to sea. If he could secure any sort of a small craft carrying sail—and this should not be difficult—he had little doubt that he would be able to make the distance across to Vladivostok about three hundred miles. A favouring wind would be provided him by his patron saint, to whom he would erect a shrine, and before whose ikon he would keep a light burning perpetually. He ought to have a little food and some water, for it is not pleasant to be becalmed in the ocean without water; but perhaps even these would be possible. Things go very smoothly when one's saint is propitious. His greatest danger lay in the likelihood that the Teijo Maru was hovering in the neighbourhood.

"But even so," he reflected. "I seem to have made a pretty mysterious disappearance. If I am not seen here on shore, the captain will take for granted that something happened to the dory, and that we were all three drowned. If I steal a sail boat, that will cause suspicion, and they will take after me. But, with this breeze, I should be far away before daylight."

It was beginning to blow. The storm was springing up which had nearly swamped Courtland Hardy in his cabin and had driven the Shikoku Maru upon a rock.

Romanoff was very tired. He had called up the reserves of his youth—perfect health and great strength—and well nigh exhausted them. He was strongly tempted to lie there in the warm sand, fanned by the sweet, lulling breeze, and sleep till morning. He yawned and nearly dozed off, but awoke himself by sheer force of will.

"It would never do," he thought. "They know I started to swim ashore, and they are not sure that the boat found me. They may come here to look for me, and I shall surely be caught. I am in Japan, but here at my feet is the sea—everybody's territory. A mile out I may come upon a Russian ship and be in Russia."

He arose and started along the beach for the fisher village, the inhabitants of which were sleeping peacefully. As he approached, he noticed, to his extreme satisfaction, that numerous boats were pulled up on the shore, and that here and there a small sailing craft was anchored. He waded out to one of these It was about what he wanted; but he found a Japanese lad of twelve or fourteen sleeping in the bottom, covered with a tarpaulin. He bent over the lad for a moment, reflecting. He must kill him, of course. It would be impossible to raise the sail and get away without waking him. Even should this be accomplished, the lad would be a Romanoff drew his knife and pulled nuisance. back the tarpaulin gently. He held the point about an inch above the boy's heart and hardened his muscles to shove the blade home. At that moment the lad smiled, stirred in his sleep and muttered something. Out of pure curiosity, Romanoff listened. The boy muttered again, repeating a girl's name. The Russian stood for a moment longer, with his knife at the sleeper's heart; and then he stole away.

"After all," he reflected. "I might just as well take a boat with nobody in it. I have no objection to killing another Jap, but why break up a love

affair?"

He waded over to another boat, a short distance away, and found it unoccupied. He commenced hasty preparations for sailing, when it occurred to him that he ought to give some thought to the matter of provisions and water. He looked about and observed a hut but a short distance from him, isolated from the rest. He determined to raid it. There must surely be some cooked rice and a jug of water in it. He ran to the hut and peeped in at the square hole which did duty as a window. Again St. Nicholas was with him, for there was no one at home, save one old woman, asleep on a mat. Romanoff cautiously worked the sliding door open and entered. He found some raw millet, a jar of cooked rice, some preserved lily root, some dried fish and a water bucket, about half full. He dumped the food all together into a crock, and tiptoed from the hut with the bucket and provisions without waking the old woman. Five minutes later he was in his boat, putting out to sea with the aid of a rising wind blowing off shore. He had not gone far, however, before he became fearful that a storm was rising, which his clumsy little boat would not be able to weather. He was not much of a sailor, and the storm at last broke upon him so suddenly that he was not able to get down his patched canvas, which was ripped from top to bottom and whipped to tatters.

This, of course, saved the boat from being overturned; and he was now scudding along under bare poles. As the storm increased in fury, Romanoff entrusted himself to the care of the Virgin and all the saints, crossing himself again and again. It was their aid, he firmly believed to the end of his days, which prevented the little boat from foundering. Certain it is that the smallest craft will sometimes outride the severest storm.

The Russian was pitched about for hours, heaved one moment to the top of a watery crest, swooped the next to the bottom of the abyss, with the waves towering above him. But the storm subsided as suddenly as it had come up, and at seven o'clock he was riding over a wild but falling sea, that gleamed red as blood in the rays of the early sun. He ate some of the rice and a couple of the salt fish. Then, lifting the bucket to his lips, he threw back his head and took a copious swallow.

"In the name of the Evil One," he exclaimed, setting the bucket down again, and spitting from his mouth as much of the liquid as remained, "what vile brew is this?"

The after taste and a glance at the contents of the pail were enough to convince him that he had brought away with him several quarts of "shirosake," or white sake, the intoxicating liquor of Japan made from rice. The beverage was a trifle sour, and for the moment refreshed him, but he well knew that if he were not rescued before very long, he would be burned alive, driven mad, by consuming thirst. He was very tired now, so he stretched himself out in the bottom of the boat and fell asleep. When he awoke the sun was directly overhead. He felt refreshed and strong again, but was ravenously hungry and very dry. He had no idea where he was,

### 64 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

but reasoned that he had been blown steadily out to sea from the fact that the hills of Japan were no longer visible. He scanned the entire horizon, but not a sail was in sight. He ate a little, and took a sip of sake. The sun was blistering hot, and there was not a particle of wind. The boat cradled idly on a gently swelling sea, the boom creaking against the mast.

His thirst was now so great that he felt seriously alarmed, and for the first time since dropping over the side of the *Teijo Maru*, he began to lose faith in his destiny. With a jug of water and a little food he would have had several days in which to turn himself. But with sake it was a different matter. A man in Romanoff's case realizes, if never before, how truly alcohol is the enemy, water the friend, of the human race.

"Curse the besotted old beast!" he growled, thinking of the old woman whose sake he had stolen. "I might have known that all Japanese are drunkards. Why did I not taste the stuff before bringing it with me? All the saints in heaven can't help a fool!"

It was the nature of the man that, now as he began to suffer, he longed for revenge upon any one upon whom he could fix the blame for his present predicament; and the more he thought of the matter the stronger became his belief that Courtland Hardy was a spy in the employ of the Japanese. His Russian training rendered it easy for him to entertain this theory.

"The Americans are notorious Japanese sympathizers," he reflected, "and they will do anything for money. He stayed there with them, and I was sent away for imprisonment, possibly death."

It occurred to him that if he should lose his reason

through thirst and be picked up by a Russian ship, it would be well to have the plans which he had brought away where they could be found. He there-

fore split open the shoe-sole with his knife.

"They are gone!" he cried. "I am right. It was Hardy who insisted that I take off my shoes. Had he not been a spy they would surely have detained him when they found him photographing the fortifications, when they took from his pockets the papers I put there. We may meet again, Mr. Hardy. God, how thirsty I am!"

He gazed long at the cool, salt, bitter waters of the sea, he trailed his hands in them over the sides of the boat. Then he picked up the bucket of white sake, looked into its lying contents, raised it to his lips, but set it down again.

"I must not," he said; "it would only make the

thirst greater."

### CHAPTER X

#### THE CHINESE SAMPAN

As the sun began to decline in the sky, Romanoff was able to get his bearings and to determine in which direction was Russia. He reckoned that Vladivostok must be about 250 miles distant, and he wondered if a man could row that far. At any rate, the nearer he got to Siberia the greater would be his chances of running into a Russian ship. There was a pair of oars in the bottom of the boat. He picked them up, headed for the setting sun, and pulled for a couple of hours. During this time his thirst grew, increased by the exertion.

"I could pull to Vladivostok easily, if I had plenty of water," he mused. "Six miles an hour—240 miles—that's only forty hours. If I had a drink of water. I could swim to Vladivostok. A

man can do anything if he only has water."

He picked up the bucket of sake again and gazed into its depths longingly. If it were only red or black, like wine, it would be easier to resist it; but it so resembled water! He set it down firmly, and cutting a bit of leather from the shoe-tap, chewed it. This excited the salivary glands and slightly moistened his tongue, affording him a sort of relief. The sun was blistering hot now, and not the slightest breath of air was stirring. On his estate near Moscow, he remembered, there was a watering

trough by the roadside. It was covered with moss, and a shady oak spread its branches above it. The water where it entered bubbled up for an inch or so above the surface, and overflowed at the side, where the horses had bitten a deep indentation. He did not dare to row any more, for he knew now that his only chance was to resist this awful fever which was consuming his vitals and parching his throat. It seemed to him that he could endure it better if he were in a great desert, but to be surrounded thus by water enough to float the navies of the world, all of it salt and bitter, was maddening mockery.

If he had only taken a drink before leaving the Teijo Maru! His last drink of water had been there at the Aomori restaurant, at seven the night before, and it was now about three in the afternoon. If a man could get that thirsty in nineteen hours what would his condition be after two or three days?

If he went mad and were rescued, would he recover his reason?

He sat still in the stern, scanning the horizon every few moments for a sail. Even a Japanese boat, he reflected, would have water on board, and his only hope of being saved lay in the possibility of being picked up by a passing ship. He resolved, if he came alive to Russian land, to erect a church to St. Nicholas instead of a shrine, and, after making this promise, he followed the entire circle of the horizon around with his eye, expecting that the white of a sail coming toward him would take shape out of the blue, or that some low-lying cloud would resolve itself into a trailing feather of smoke. But his hopes were not realized, and he remembered with fear and chagrin that he had once made a promise to a minor saint which he had not fulfilled.

For hours he sat without seeing a sign of a sail, and then, just at sunset, two passed, going in opposite directions, one far to the north, the other an equal distance to the south.

As the cool of evening came on he was able to endure his thirst a trifle better. He chewed another piece of the leather, and his tongue, which had felt large and stiff in his mouth, became limber and moist again, and hope, that elusive and often lying phantom that rarely deserts a man till his eyes shut for ever on the scenes of the world, once more smiled upon him. If war broke out between Japan and Russia, he would be sure to get hold of Aisome, he would certainly have another meeting with Hardy.

It flashed over him now that the latter was a Jew. He was small and dark, and there were millions of Jews in America.

He slept a little during the night, but every time that he awoke his first thought was of that watering trough on his estate, of the green frogs that floated on it with their bulging eyes above the surface and their legs trailing behind. He remembered, too, the snails, some of them over two inches in length, and how cold they were to the touch!

Dawn came at last, and soon the broad disc of the sun was standing on the edge of the sea, and his rays spread out over the surface of the ocean in a giant fan of rosy light. The heat began immediately to make itself felt. Romanoff arose to his full height, and, turning slowly about, scanned the entire horizon. There was not a sail in sight, not a sign of help anywhere.

His tongue, an inert, swollen mass in his parched throat, was choking him. He laughed wildly and cursed the Virgin, St. Nicholas and all the saints.

Then he lifted the bucket of sake, thinking to drink deep of it, to drain it to the dregs and to die in a drunken delirium. He took several swallows, when, chancing to raise his eyes, something caught his attention, there, far away, low down where the blue of the sea melted into the blue of the sky. He set the bucket down and gazed long, straining his bloodshot eyes. The object grew more and more distinct, it took definite shape, it left the sky behind it and stood out alone upon the waters—the square sail of a Chinese sampan.

For twenty minutes, for half an hour, the Russian did not move. The uncouth craft was coming on with a following wind; her low flat hull became visible. Romanoff seized the bucket of sake, whirled it and threw it to a great distance. Then he dropped upon his knees and thanked the Virgin and the saints for his deliverance, which he believed to be as good as accomplished. The sampan approached nearer, and he observed that it would pass some distance to the leeward of him. He grabbed the oars and rowed madly, strengthened by his hope.

His only thought was that there would be water on the sampan. She came on slowly, her great quilted sail swelling in the gentle breeze. A giant Chinawoman stood at the tiller, and a little old Chinaman was busy about the deck. Romanoff yelled at them frantically, again and again, in Russian, in the few words of Chinese which he knew, in his perfect Japanese, but they stood looking at him and paid no heed. He feared that he would not reach them, and redoubled his efforts, till the muscles of his arms and mighty back stood out in knots. He shouted at them in Japanese.

"I am a Russian prince. Take me on board

and give me water and I will make you rich!" but they did not lay by. They only continued to gaze at him in wonder and to chatter with each other. If they understood him, his appearance did not corroborate his words. As the boat came up to the sampan, near the prow, the Chinaman shrieked, in sudden terror:—

"He is a madman, he will kill us! Keep off!" and ran to the low rail with a boat hook in his hand. Dropping the oars, Romanoff seized the small anchor which was attached to the prow of his own boat by means of a long line, and, whirling it about his head, hurled it at the unfortunate Chinaman. struck him full in the stomach, and he dropped upon the deck, vomiting blood. His wife dashed into the cabin and emerged almost immediately with an axe, but she was too late, for Romanoff had seized the anchor rope and pulled himself on board, where he stood now, awaiting her onslaught with the boat hook in his hand. He was a terrifying apparition, in his underclothes, his feet bare, his eyes inflamed, his parched lips drawn back from his teeth.

"Water, damn you, water!" he yelled, advancing upon the woman. She hurled the axe at his head and missed. He knocked her down with the boat hook and rushed into the cabin. There he found a large earthen crock of water and a gourd by it. He dipped the gourd full and drank it all. Then he dipped again and drank again. He must have remained in the cabin for at least half an hour, taking an occasional sip of the water, when, his thirst being appeased, he remembered that he was very hungry, and he ate heartily of baked pork and cooked rice; after which, crossing himself devoutly, he went out upon the deck. The Chinaman lay as

he had fallen, and his wife was sitting up, looking about in a dazed way. Romanoff lifted the body of the Chinaman as lightly as though it had been a bag of bran and pitched it carelessly into the sea. Then he felt of the woman's skull, to see if it were broken or not. Satisfied by his examination, and by the dawning hate and fear in her eyes, that she was not seriously injured, he asked in his bad Chinese.

- "Where from?"
- "Corea."
- "And where to?"
- "Japan."
- "No," he said, "you are mistaken. You are bound for Vladivostok."
- "To Japan," she repeated; "to Japan."
  Romanoff put the point of his knife to her throat.
- "Where are you going? he asked again, "I will give you till I count five to decide. One-
  - "To Vladivostok," said the woman.
  - "Good! then take the tiller and turn about."

### CHAPTER XI

#### ZAKOUSKA

THE Russian steamer which took Hardy into Vladivostok was an iron tub of the tramp variety, and not a soul on board could speak a word of any tongue ever heard before by the American. He soon became aware, however, that the red-faced, burly captain and his two officers meant to be kind to him, and that their idea of friendliness consisted principally in getting him to eat and drink as much and as frequently as possible. After vainly attempting to converse with him, and learning only that he was American, the captain led him to the dining-room and introduced him to one of the great institutions of Russia, the zakouska, or lunch of hors d'oeuvres, washed down with much strong drink. At one end of the room, near the sideboard, a table was set, spread with dishes of sardines and sardellas, caviar, chunks of pickled fish, sandwiches, shrimps in bottles. The captain poured out two generous bumpers of a white liquid into glasses, handed one to Hardy, clinked, and drained the contents of the other at a gulp. Hardy swallowed the liquid, and the tears came into his eyes; he nearly strangled. He looked about for water, but in vain. He was to learn soon that water for drinking and washing purposes is the one thing most difficult to obtain in Holy Russia.

"Vodka?" explained the captain, with an inquiring smile, and poured out two more bumpers.

Hardy refused, his host urging him to drink, with many good-natured gestures. But the American indicated, by pointing to the vodka, and imitating the actions of a drunken man, that he feared the effects of over-indulgence. The captain next picked out bits of food from the various dishes, which he offered to Hardy upon a fork, eating meanwhile himself with much relish, and washing the morsels down with frequent potations of the white, fiery liquid. Every time he took a drink he insisted so strongly upon his guest joining him that the latter had great difficulty in not appearing churlish, and at the same time keeping his head. He was not in the habit of indulging in liquor to excess, and this appeared to him to bear a striking resemblance, both in colour and quality, to pure alcohol. He did not observe that the Russian was in the least affected by his frequent potations.

They lingered at the zakouska for fifteen or twenty minutes, when the captain escorted him to a cabin, a comfortable room on the upper deck, and left him to his meditations, which were, in the main, pleasant

enough.

He was surely on the way to Russia now. He had escaped with his life and even with his baggage and his money, from extraordinary and unlooked-for perils. He knew that he was going to Vladivostok, for he had said "Vladivostok?" to the captain several times with a rising inflection, and the reply had always been: "Da! da! da! (pronounced Dah!) Vladivostok."

"Da! da! da!" he reasoned, probably meant "Yes," and if so, he had already learned his first Russian word.

The people, he argued, were a friendly, hospitable, simple-hearted sort, to be judged rather by this

captain than by Stapleton Neville, who was a spy after all, and spies, from the very nature of their

calling, are treacherous and unreliable.

He wondered what the Japanese would do to the pseudo-Englishman, and hoped that they would not kill him. He thought of Aisome again, and he could not be sure that he had been the victim of treachery on her part. Whenever he was quite convinced that such was the case, the memory of that dewy kiss at the wharf in Japan would arise and plead in her defence, and it seemed to him that he could smell once more the exquisite perfume of her hair, like the haunting soul of some rare and priceless flower. He wondered if he should ever see her again, and free her from this taint of suspicion. The thing seemed scarcely possible, yet he realized that it would give him great satisfaction.

As he was immersed in these thoughts there was a loud knock upon the door. He opened, and found one of the two officers standing there, smiling affably.

"Zakouska?" inquired the mate.

Hardy now found that he knew two Russian words. "Zakouska," he remembered from hearing the captain use it, signified sandwiches, pickles, caviar, sardellas, chunks of fish, vodka, vodka, vodka. His first impulse was to refuse. He certainly wanted no more vodka, and his appetite was appeased. Yet he must not let these people outdo him in courtesy. They meant well, and, besides, they were the people among whom he was going to take up his residence. It flashed across his mind, too, that here was an opportunity to consummate his first complete Russian conversation. So he smiled and replied, "Da, da, da!" The officer linked arms with him and conducted him to the dining-room, where Hardy consumed his second glass of wheat

whisky and ate more sandwiches, pickles, caviar and salt fish.

Zakouska lasted, off and on, for about an hour, during which the captain and his two officers ate and drank almost continually, appearing to get hungrier and hungrier all the time and to suffer no exhibitanting effects from the vodka.

By combining the utmost firmness with evident good-nature, Hardy managed to pull through without getting drunk, thereby accomplishing a feat quite remarkable in a foreigner accepting Russian hospitality.

Luncheon was at last brought on, consisting of sour cold soup, meat boiled with vegetables, and more caviar, flanked by a bottle of excellent white wine from the Crimea.

The samovar, filled with water kept hot by means of coals poured into a receptacle in its interior, was now brought in, and a small pot of very strong tea. The Russians turned a little of the tea into glasses, which they filled with hot water from the samovar, and seasoned with sugar and slices of lemon. Hardy could not help comparing this method with that of the Japanese, who drink their tea without "trimmin's," and directly from the grounds, on which they let the decoction stand but a few moments. The captain and the two officers drank half a dozen cups of tea apiece, and urged the beverage upon their guest, who, in this case, as in that of the vodka, was unable to do his share; not this time, however, because he feared intoxicating effects, but for the reason that his stomach lacked sufficient powers of distention. He accepted with gratitude, however, several of the long cigarettes, mostly paper mouth-pieces, but containing a few whiffs of excellent tobacco, which they offered him. After fairly swilling, for politeness' sake, all of the tea which he could contain without bursting, Hardy made a sign, easily comprehended, that he was sleepy, and went to his cabin. Stretching himself upon the bunk, he fell into a sound slumber, which had endured, as it seemed to him, but a few moments, when he was awakened by a loud knocking upon his door.

"Da? da?" he yelled, with an inquiring inflection.

"Zakouska?" shouted the gruff friendly voice of the captain through the door.

"Zakouska?" inquired Hardy.

"Da, da, da, da!" replied the captain.

The American consulted his watch. It was six o'clock, and he felt no more hunger than if he had but just eaten. Nevertheless, he opened the door and locked arms with the captain, who conducted him to the dining-room, where another zakouska ordeal was gone through, lasting till dinner was served, after which the samovar was again brought in, and the Russians settled down to tea drinking in earnest.

The next afternoon they entered the magnificent harbour of Vladivostok, passing the high rock crowned with a lighthouse, that stands as a sentinel at its mouth. The city, not visible till the last moment, burst suddenly upon Hardy's view, and gave him a very favourable impression of this country, into which he had come to live and to retrieve, if possible, his shattered fortunes. Here, crowning the hills that dominate the harbour, was a modern European city of houses, many of them several storys in height, evidently built of brick and stone. A couple of men-of-war, very trim in their white paint, besides numerous merchant vessels flying the Russian flag, lay at anchor in the bay, while numerous Chinese sampans and a junk or two

drifting about, bore witness that here the extremes of the East and the West meet and overlap. Two or three of the sampans, indeed, floated up to Hardy's ship as she cast anchor, and their long-queued owners made clamorous application to carry any one ashore who might wish to go. Hardy had already picked out the Celestial whose appearance best suited him, wondering whether or not he would take Japanese money, when he noticed a steam launch rapidly approaching, and a cheerful voice hailed him :--

"Is that an American on board there?"

"Yes," Hardy shouted back, thrilling with sudden delight at the sound of his mother tongue; "how did you know?"

"By the cut of your clothes. Where's your baggage?"

In my cabin."

"All right," said the man in the launch, "I'll have it brought out. Get in here and I'll take you ashore."

A few words of gruff Russian to the captain, and Hardy's trunks and baggage were brought out, and five minutes later he was flying ashore in the launch of the American Trading Company.

As he was leaving, the captain dashed up and wrung his hand, asking anxiously:-" Zakouska?"

"He wants to know," explained Hardy, leaning over the rail, "if I want more zakouska. I've had zakouska enough to last me a lifetime. "What shall I tell him?"

"Tell him 'nyet'," came the reply, and the American shook the hands of the captain and his two kind-hearted officers vigorously, repeating many times :- "Nyet! Nyet! Nyet! Nyet!'

And thus he learned his third Russian word.

### CHAPTER XII

### IN VLADIVOSTOK

"WANT to go to the American consul's," said Hardy, "as soon as I land, and then I should like to get located in a hotel, till I can catch the first comfortable steamer up the river. It's fortunate for me you came to take me off, for my knowledge of Russian is, as yet, rather limited."

"You can start up the river the day after tomorrow," replied the Vladivostok agent, "on the Alexsay, which goes as far as Vlagovestchensk. You will be quite comfortable on her, and will be likely to get a room all to yourself, as I understand she

is not crowded."

"That will suit me perfectly," said Hardy. "I see no reason for lingering here, fascinating as the town

looks, any longer than necessary."

"By the way," volunteered the other, "you will have quite a distinguished travelling companion if if you go on the *Alexsay*—the Princess Romanova, who has been here visiting her relative, General Romanoff. She has made a sensation in the garrison society here. She's a stunning-looking woman."

"Women do not interest me," replied Hardy. "I came here to work, not to mingle in fashionable society—and, anyhow, suddenly remembering his changed fortunes—"it is not likely that a princess would become wildly enthusiastic over a store-keeper."

The customs officials proved little troublesome, and Hardy's baggage was loaded upon the backs of several Corean boys, in ragged, filthy garments, and with pitiful, pathetic, beautiful girl features. These were all equipped with wooden platforms built out from their backs and supported by means of straps passed over and under the shoulders.

"Gosteenneetsa!" commanded the agent as soon as the trunks and valises were lifted to these platforms. The boys moved away, bending low under their heavy burdens. "But hold on a minute," added the agent, "I'd better pay them here, as you don't understand the language and they wouldn't be satisfied, no matter what you gave them."

He put a few coins into each of the outstretched

palms, and the boys departed.

"What does 'gusty' something or other mean?" asked Hardy. "Get along with you? I noticed

they moved off very meekly after you said it."

"Gosteenneetsa. It's the Russian word for hotel, and you had better remember it. By the way, those boys will wait at the hotel till you come, if it's three days from now, and will set up a pitiful wail for more money. They'll bother the life out of you, if you show the least sign of yielding. I have paid them the regular price and a little over. Just slap their faces and give them a kick or two and they will leave. There's no other way to treat them. They are the very dregs of humanity—whining beggars and thieves, mere vermin in human form. I'll put you into a droshky now and tell the man to drive you to Consul Greener's. Sorry I can't go with you, but we're pretty busy here."

At the agent's summons a carriage resembling a victoria came up, drawn by two active, nervous little horses, one between the shafts, and wearing

a huge arch of wood over his haunches, the other running free, between long loose traces. isvoschik got down from the box and saluted; a stolid-appearing Russian, wearing a blouse, a shiny cabman's hat and a pair of high boots, into the tops of which his trousers were tucked. Swinging the long lash of his whip about the horses' ears, he yelled at them and Hardy was off through the hilly, rocky streets of Vladivostok, his carriage bounding over stones and dipping into ruts, while the maddened steeds, their ears lying low and their bellies close to the ground, tore and scrambled along. whip lash of the reckless Jehu writhed continually in the air, cracking like a series of pistol shots. The feet of the horse under the arch clattered rapidly with the regular sound of an animal galloping resolutely ahead, while the other at times ran close to him, at others, far away, with a quarter of the width of the road between himself and his mate. Occasionally he turned at right angles for a moment to the animal between the shafts, then, at a crack of the lash he would turn head on and leap forward, giving the carriage a jerk that nearly broke the back of its occupant.

Down almost perpendicular declivities they ricocheted, the horses scampering like rabbits to keep out of the droshky's way, and around unexpected corners, the two rear wheels of the vehicle sliding sidewise and throwing a shower of stones into the air. Hardy wondered if the agent had promised the isvoschik a great reward if he broke the record for speed; or if he had told him that somebody was breathing his last and that he was running a race with death. But this seemed hardly possible, for, from his perilous seat, to which he was clinging with both hands, he could see other droshkys flying about,

as though all the cabmen of Vladivostok were madmen. At times the isvoschik, catching sight of some shrine or church, would rise to his full height, cross himself reverently, then drop back into the seat, swear at his frightened and frantic steeds, and let off another volley from his whip lash.

Once, as they were going up a hill, the two steeds running neck and neck, another droshky came flying down, and as it swayed from side to side, like a quadriga in a chariot race, the hubs clicked against

those of Hardy's vehicle in passing.

A woman was its occupant, and in the brief glimpse which Hardy got of her he noticed that her hair was yellow, and that she was unmistakably an aristocrat. The isvoschik looked about with democratic friendliness and shouted, pointing over his shoulder with his whipstalk:—

"Romanova!"

"By Jove!" ejaculated Hardy, "she certainly is beautiful," and he speculated as to whether he would ever attain a position here in Siberia which would enable him to associate with such as she. In the old days of the yacht and the cotillons of Mrs. Johnny Folkstone's set, this would have been the sort of woman he would naturally associate with. But he was entering on a mercantile career now, and she would be likely to regard him with well-bred contempt. No; he would be her fellow passenger for days on the Alexsay, but he could not even gain a speaking acquaintance with her. As these thoughts were passing through his mind, the cabman suddenly brought the horses to a dead stop by a tremendous yank at the lines, nearly precipitating Hardy over the dashboard, and pointed at a large square house.

He had arrived at the American consul's.

This affable and capable official received Hardy

with open arms and overwhelmed him with courtesy. He gave him much good advice, warning him, among other things, against criticizing the government or making any disrespectful remarks concerning any-

body in public office.

"Remember," he said, "that you are in Russia now and not in America. This is a splendid, kindhearted, generous people; and so long as you keep a discreet tongue in your head, you will get along all right and nobody will interfere with you. By the way, I see that you have your camera with you. You will not be allowed to use that anywhere in the country without a special permit. You might as well put it up, as you will not be stopping long enough in each place to get the necessary permit, and for travelling a general order would be required from the chief of police at St. Petersburg."

Hardy smiled.

"Do you mean to say," he asked, "that the government of this country interferes in such trivial personal matters as the taking of a few bits of scenery and groups of peasants? Well, if that is so, this is a paternal form of government, to say the least."

"Now, there you go!" exclaimed the consul. "If you do much of that sort of talking you will be appealing to me to get you out of trouble before you leave Vladivostok. You really must let the government alone. Find out what the police regulations are and comply with them. After you have been here awhile, you will learn that it is possible to do anything here, if you only go about it in the right way. Let the photographing go now, but get your general permit as soon as possible for your next journey."

During the course of the evening, Hardy told

him his adventures in Japan, and of the discomfiture of Stapleton Neville. The consul whistled and looked serious.

"I hope the Japanese make away with him," he remarked, "for your sake, for he will never forgive you for not being victimized by him. So the war fever is running high in Japan, eh? Poor little country! Russia will crush her as a bull does a toad, and it's a pity, too, for the Japanese are picturesque. By the way, have you sheets and a blanket with you?"

"No," replied Hardy; "why?"

"They won't furnish you with any at the hotel, and you'll need a blanket, and it's a trifle chilly

to-night."

After bidding the consul good-night, Hardy went to his hotel. He was glad that he had brought the consul's bedding along, as he found that he did indeed need it. After washing his face and hands he discovered that he also needed a towel, and going to the door he shouted for a servant. A Chinese boy appeared, to whom, by signs, he indicated his desire, but the boy, with an insolent gesture, departed, and was seen no more. Hardy now made such an uproar that the proprietor at last came upon the scene; and he, too, after a voluble outburst, also went away and refused to interest himself further in the matter. This incident irritated the American. He wiped his face and hands on one of Consul Greener's sheets, and was still thinking about it, when he was startled by a loud rapping on his door. He opened, and was confronted by a thin-faced, apologetic old gentleman.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, in perfect English, "I beg ten thousand pardons foing you, but the police wish to see you." "I beg ten thousand pardons for disturb-

## 84 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

"And will you kindly inform me," said Hardy,

"what the police wish of me?"

"Certainly sir. They merely wish to extend to you a formal welcome to this country; to ask if you have anything to complain of so far, and to find out if there is anything which they can do for you."

"Please extend to the police the assurances of my most distinguished consideration. Tell them for me that I have nothing to complain of, and that there is only one thing that I wish of them."

"And that?

"Is for them to leave me alone."

"I should regret," said the apologetic old gentleman, kindly, "to convey to them any such message as that."

"Perhaps it would be as well, then, to take them no message at all, except that I am tired and wish to go to bed. So, if you will excuse me—?"

"I hope," said the old gentleman, "that you will not put them to the disagreeable alternative of changing their request into a command."

Hardy, remembering the consul's advice, and

much wondering, picked up his hat.

"You will not need your hat," said the old gentleman. "They have for your convenience taken a temporary office in one of the rooms of the hotel."

"Oh, that's very kind of them!" exclaimed Hardy; "I'm deeply grateful that they did not

take up their quarters in my room."

He followed the old gentleman down a flight of stairs, and into an apartment, where, on the opposite side of a table, sat two officers in uniform, the one of middle age, very corpulent, the other a dapper little lieutenant, whose brass buttons shone as though they had been recently polished.

Hardy was motioned to a seat, which he took, and then was minutely questioned by both officers. the old gentleman acting as interpreter and taking voluminous notes. The questions concerned Hardy's nationality, the place of his birth, the length of time he had been in Japan, his business in Russia, his destination, etc. His passport was examined and taken charge of, with the promise that it would be returned in the morning, and then he was asked if he was satisfied with his treatment so far, and if there was anything the authorities could do for him. To the last question he replied in the negative. Then the two officers arose and shook hands with him and he started for the door; but just as he was passing out a whimsical notion came into his head, and his sense of humour was aroused.

"There is one thing the authorities can do for me," he said.

The officers were delighted and they bowed their

acquiescence.

"Tell them," he said to the old man, "that they can use their influence with mine host here to get a clean towel for me. If necessary, let them invoke the entire power of the Russian government to that end."

The interpreter hesitated a moment, and then translated. The faces of the officers flushed, and darkened, but they ordered the boniface to be called. They spoke a few words to him, and Hardy departed. An instant later his door was opened and an incredibly filthy towel was pitched into the room.

The next morning Hardy took his place in the railway train bound north through Siberia for Khabarovka, on the Amur. He had secured a first-class compartment, and sat waiting for the train to pull out on schedule time, eight o'clock.

The hour arrived, but the train did not move. A quarter past, half past, and still there was no sign of departure. At last, impatient, he rose and stepped out into the long narrow hall which ran the entire length of the car. An intelligent-looking Russian was pacing up and down, and him Hardy asked, in the best French at his command:—

"What is the matter? Why do we not start?"

"On attend," replied the Russian, "they are waiting for the Princess Romanova—ah, here she comes now!"

The American looked from the window. A droshky was driving up, and in it sat a tall, slender and exquisitely graceful woman fairly smothered in costly flowers, that filled the carriage and were piled beside her upon the seat. Her face was the purest Russian type, her complexion was marvellous, her eyes were a laughing blue, and her hair was of the colour of ripe wheat. Half a dozen young officers, in natty uniforms, and riding spirited horses, accompanied her.

"By Jove!" sighed Hardy, "but she's a thorough-

bred and a beauty too!"

The Princess took plenty of time for her adieux, after which she languidly and gracefully entered the car. The officers brought her flowers in to her, and descended upon the platform, where they stood in an adoring and sorrowful group, their caps in their hands. And then, her Highness the Princess Romanova being aboard, the train started slowly on its 500-mile journey to Khabarovka.

### CHAPTER XIII

### WHO IS THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA?

THE journey into Siberia was begun! Siberia, that vast, mysterious region whose very name has come to be synonomous with all that is most dreaded by the human race: exile, eternal farewells, the clanking of chains over endless frozen roads, the knout, despair, all the horrors of a living death.

Hardy sat up in his compartment of one of the first-class cars and gazed from the window, eagerly scanning the landscape for some sign or evidence of the things that had given the country its sinister reputation. His first impression, as the train left Vladivostok behind, was a complete refutation of all preconceived notions. There were no convicts anywhere in sight, no fields of lice and snow. Instead, he was journeying on a pleasant summer's day through a vividly green prairie, wide as the eye could reach, where the fat cattle waded up to their knees in the lush grass; and yellow dandelions as large as tea-saucers, and fierce tiger-lilies, swayed and nodded by the million in the balmy breeze. He had expected to find something significant, somehow, in the aspect of Siberia itself, something sinister and forbidding. Yet this, save for the greater luxuriance of the vegetation and the profusion and brilliancy of the flowers, might have been a stretch of Minnesota or Manitoba. He was

in the same old familiar world, and the idea occurred to him that men, and not God, have made countries good or bad. He thought, too, of old Frederick Emery's characterization of Siberia as a region of unlimited resources and virgin opportunities, and he felt a resolve springing within him to seize strenuously upon every chance thrown in his way to show himself the stuff of which pioneers and conquerors are made. If a man wanted to put an unpleasant past behind him and begin anew, here certainly was the place to do it.

There were two couches in his compartment, the one serving as a seat or lounge by day, the other folding back against the wall into a comfortable back rest. As the train was not crowded, Hardy had the entire compartment for himself, and thus was given undisturbed opportunity for reflection.

Again his experience in Japan and on the Japanese sea ran through his mind, and he could not help comparing this country with the land of the Mikado.

"Two countries and peoples more radically different from each other," he mused "it would be difficult to imagine. What a difference there is between these lonely stretches of prairie and the teeming rice fields and villages of Japan! between the moujik in his blouse and high boots and the little, slant-eyed Asiatic; between the droshky with its two wild horses and the jinriksha; between these stolid-faced women and the picturesque geishas; between Aisome and the Princess Romanova!"

He was soon to learn that the women of Russia are quite as fun-loving as their sisters of the island empire, and that the daughters of France or Italy are stolid in comparison with them. That the "eternal feminine" lives on amid the snows and

# WHO IS THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA? 89

solitudes of Siberia and exists even in the hearts of the lowliest peasants was made evident at the desolate little stations where they stopped to take on wood and water for the engines; for the women who thronged the platforms with bottles of milk and bouquets of gorgeous wild flowers, or who stood at long counters laden with country produce, were gay with bits of bright colour and showed a fondness for various shades of red.

Weary at last of sitting, Hardy went out into the long hall at one side of the car and walked up and down. Here he found the Russian who spoke French also promenading, and squeezed against the wall several times to let him pass.

"Pardon, monsieur," said this gentleman, as the train stopped, "but we remain here long enough to take zakouska? Perhaps you feel the need of refreshment? Do you know what the zakouska is?"

"Oh, yes," replied Hardy, laughing, "I know what zakouska is very well. I should indeed like some."

He had thought that he should never want zakouska again, but he was hungry now and tired, and this Russian custom appealed to him as an agreeable institution. He joined his new-found friend, and the two descended upon the platform together and entered a low wooden building, where a throng of Russians from the first, second and third class compartments were crowding about a long bar in the most democratic manner, partaking of sandwiches, salt fish, caviar and vodka, vodka, vodka." Hardy ate of the various hors d'oeuvres and drank a glass of vodka and found it good. Then, after a great ringing of bells he went on board. "Where do we get dinner?" he asked, as the

train again got in motion, and was informed that the midmeal would be served at another station about a mile farther on. He felt hungry, and took pride in the fact that he was becoming Russianized quite rapidly.

"Have you secured your compartment on the Alexsay?" asked the Russian.

"No," replied Hardy, "Why? Will the boat

be crowded?"

"I hardly think so, but the Princess Romanova is going on her, and it is likely that all the best accommodations will have been reserved for her. She does not seem to be travelling with much of a suite, though, fortunately. Her Highness will probably want two or three cabins for herself, a couple for her baggage, one for each of her two maids, and one for her man."

"And will she be given all this, even if the rest of us are compelled to sleep on the decks?"

"Certainly," replied the Russian. Her Highness is—her Highness.

Hardy was about to declaim against a government where the aristocracy were given such privileges, but, fortunately, his French was not quite equal to his indignation, and in the moment of hesitation he remembered Consul Greener's warning.

"And who in the world is the Princess Romanova?" he asked, with a slight tinge of sarcasm. He would have liked to say "Who the dickens?" but he did not know the French for "the dickens."

Princess Romanova," explained the "The Russian, "belongs to one of the oldest families in the empire. She is a distant relative of the Czar, who is my imperial master"—and here he took his hat off. "She is immensely wealthy, and has city palaces at Moscow and Petersburg,

besides a country estate near the former city. She is as wealthy as she is beautiful."

"She must be very wealthy, then," said the American, with conviction.

The Russian smiled.

"Monsieur speaks the truth," he said. "He is also, like all Americans, very gallant. When we take zakouska again we will drink to the Princess Romanova."

"With pleasure," said Hardy.

After two very comfortable nights, the train bearing Frederick Courtland Hardy arrived, about noon, at Khabarovka, on the lordly Amur. It had been raining, and the low wooden station resembled an ark stranded in seas of black mud.

Hardy found an agent of the company awaiting him here, a San Franciscan who nearly fell upon his neck from joy at seeing a fellow-countryman and hearing again the English language spoken. He did not know that Americans could become so demonstrative. His goods were loaded upon a telega, a sort of long boat upon wheels and without springs, and were sent to the Alexsay at its wharf, two or three miles distant, while Hardy and the agent took seats in a droshky and tore furiously away to the company's store, over rocks and through ruts and puddles, the mud spraying in a centrifugal shower from the bumping and whizzing wheels.

"Tell him to drive slower," shouted Hardy.

"We have plenty of time."

"No power on earth could make a Russian cabman drive slowly," replied the agent, "they are the lineal descendants of Jehu, and their speed is a part of their nature. You might as well try to make the Amur run up hill."

That night, in darkness as black as ink, and in a

drizzling rain, Hardy went on board the Alexsay, to begin his long journey up the Amur. The water, the agent informed him, was rising, owing to the recent rains, and there would be little danger of grounding. The trip to the Vlagovestchensk should be made in five days.

"There is a little spice of danger attending the journey," said the agent, on taking leave; ship that went up ahead of this was fired on by Manchurian brigands. I saw several bullet holes in her side myself, made by rifle balls. But I hardly think you need feel much apprehension. Since the Cossacks destroyed Aigun, and killed every living man, woman and child that could not get away, the Chinese have been pretty quiet. That taught them a lesson they will not soon forget. I have heard it rumoured that they have been somewhat emboldened of late by Japanese agitators who are working among them. The Japanese, they tell me, are talking of war with Russia. Foolish people! The Russians would eat them up. Japan would be a Russian province two months after the declaration of hostilities. 'Twould be a pity, too; Japan is a picturesque country, as I remember it."

Hardy laid an American rifle under his bed that night, the property of the Trading Company, taken, by the agent's advice, from the stores in

Khabarovka.

<sup>1</sup> He slept soundly, but had a vivid dream of the Princess Romanova and Aisome racing over a Siberian meadow, the one in a droshky and the other in a jinriksha.

# CHAPTER XIV

#### HER HIGHNESS SMILES AND NODS

THE trip from Khabarovka to Vlagovestchensk occupied five days and was uneventful when compared with the more exciting happenings that befell Courtland Hardy and his fellow-passengers farther on. Still, two or three things occurred worthy of record; one at least that Hardy himself regarded as epochal in his life. He came into direct contact with the Princess Romanova and acquired a nodding acquaintance with her. As this befell on the first day out, and as she nodded to him once each day, namely, in the morning, his good fortune brought to him four nods and as many very sweet smiles between Khabarovka and Vlagovestchensk. It was perhaps fortunate that he could not talk to her, as she might have discouraged any familiarity, which would have hurt his pride, for the Courtland Hardys maintain the fiction of family superiority, and in their hearts believe themselves "just as good as anybody," as the old song says of My Aunt Sally.

It was his skill with the pistol which caused the Princess to confess that she was aware of his existence, and allow the light of recognition to dawn once a day in her laughing blue eyes. I say "confess that she was aware," because, being a woman, she must have noticed him and wondered who he was as soon as she caught sight of him; for training and tradition had given him a reserved, aristocratic air, and he managed somehow, even while travelling,

to dress with that quiet elegance which had become second nature to him.

It was during one of the long delays caused by the necessity of taking on wood that Hardy's acquaintance with the Princess began. The Alexsay was a stern wheeler, drawing three feet and a half of water, and she stopped five or six times each twenty-four hours for a fresh fuel supply, the men bringing it two and two, upon long bars, down the steep bank and across the springy plank to the deck.

Learning that there would be a stop of about three hours, Hardy went with one Julius Smulders to take a long walk in the woods, to gather wild flowers and to catch a sight of one of the cuckoos which fill the forests of Siberia with their strange cries, exactly as though millions of invisible Swiss clocks were hanging among the trees. On their return, the two men heard the sound of shooting.

"My God!" cried the American, his face blanching as he thought of the Princess, "I believe the

brigands have attacked the boat."

He ran toward the sound, followed by Smulders, and beheld General Catkoff shooting at a bottle on a stump, at a distance of twenty paces. The general was the military governor of Irkutsk, now on his way to his post, from which he had been absent three months. He was a grey, corpulent man, with a kindly face, the only person aboard of sufficient rank to associate intimately with the Princess, in whom he seemed to take a fatherly interest. He fired five times and missed, much to the amusement of the Princess, who stood near. In fact, her derisive laughter so irritated the pompous general that he threw the weapon spitefully to the ground and began to explain volubly to his fair tormentor.

"What does he say?" asked the German of a Viennese opera singer from Vladivostok, who was also one of the spectators, and a moment later he explained to Hardy.

"He says it's an American pistol from Vladi-

vostok, and that it's no good."

Courtland Hardy picked up the weapon and examined it. It was not an expensive model, but a practical arm, of honest blue steel. He tossed it familiarly in his hand and then said to Smulders:—

"Will you ask our fair interpreter here to present my compliments to the general, and tell him that I am an American and beg the privilege of proving

the excellence of this American weapon?"

As the Viennese addressed the general, Hardy lifted his hat gracefully. The Princess clapped her little hands, nodded pleasantly at the American and cried, "Bravo! bravo!" It was she, evidently, who persuaded the general to reload the

weapon and accede to the request.

Now, as usual, there was a group of peasant women standing about, who had come down to the boat, from the Lord knows where, to sell milk. Hardy tossed fifty kopeks upon the earth, and picking up five empty bottles, walked to a log near the stump, where he set them in a row. Then he returned to the group standing about the general and commenced firing. The distance was in reality not great nor the feat difficult for so good a shot. The effect, however, was spectacular, for between the rapid "cracks" of the weapon could be heard the "ching, ching, ching" of the breaking bottles.

Hardy offered the revolver to the general with a polite salute, but the latter generously complimented him on his marksmanship and begged that

he would keep it, adding to the gift the box of cartridges which he produced from a coat pocket. The American was somewhat embarrassed. His pride was averse to the acceptance of the gift, vet he was unable to explain that he meant no offence. He stood offering the pistol to the Russian, while the latter pressed the cartridges upon him. The Princess relieved the situation by taking the cartridges and handing them to Hardy with a beseeching little moue. He accepted with a courtly bow, as graceful as though he were saluting a cotillon partner. The Princess responded in kind and walked away on the arm of the military governor. The whistle shrieked and they were off again, purring up the broad river. Occasionally a wild duck would arise ahead of them and whiz away, or a goose with long, inquiring neck, writhing to right and left like a snake. Once a huge bear lumbered down upon a spit of sand and looked at them, clumsily curious.

Up the broad, yellow river they forged, the current purring against the prow, the patient engine breathing softly, like a living thing. By clean, pebbly beaches and rocky shores they steamed all day, with the endless green woods of Siberia on the right, the green, endless forests of Manchuria on the left. On the Russian side they saw an occasional Cossack village, of low, white houses with green window frames, but the Chinese bank was utterly destitute of human life, a voiceless wilderness save for the cry of the cuckoo in the dim shadows of the forest, and the mournful howl of the wolf, for the river, though a boundary line, is no barrier, and the dreaded Cossack has a way of coming across and sparing neither man, woman nor child.

And all night the tireless steamer swam up the

Amur that ran like a river of ink in the light of the new moon, while the waters whispered and rustled about her sides. Hardy sat up till late, and it seemed to him that the stars were dimmer than upon the Mississippi, down which he had once travelled, and farther away, adding by their aloofness to the feeling of vastness, and the loneliness which the country inspired.

Shortly before twelve he went to his cabin, but, hearing a terrific blowing of the whistle, came upon deck again. There was a red eye of light in the far distance, and toward that the boat was steering. Nearer approach discovered a bewhiskered moujik in a long cloak, sitting by a bonfire. He had wood to sell, and soon the crew were filing up a steep path with their carrying sticks over their shoulders. Other immense bonfires were lighted, casting a red, flaring radiance far over the river; and by this illumination the men brought the wood on board.

They must have taken on a large supply of fuel this time, for they did not stop again till ten 'clock on the next day, when an amusing little incident occurred, which served Hardy as a revelation of the character of the Russian women in general and of the Romanova in particular.

Besides the Viennese opera company from Vladivostok, there was on board an enormously fat songstress bound for Irkutsk, where she was to fill an engagement in a vaudeville theatre. This woman was one of that numerous class who, after having become impossible in any other part of the globe through obesity, advanced years, loss of voice, or other cause, go to Siberia and again become the rage.

Madame Augusta Vacco was forty, if a day, and

weighed all of two hundred pounds, yet she was shy and kittenish, and had with her a chaperon, a little fat old woman in black.

The passengers had nearly all of them gone to the woods, as usual, and when the whistle blew they came back, eagerly running, their hands filled with the glorious flowers of Siberia; wild peonies, tiger lilies, lilies of the valley, and tall lilies of a blood red hue; great fragrant roses, wild lilac, priceless orchids of several varieties. The Princess came last, walking leisurely, carrying three long tiger lilies in her hand. The sight of her, and especially her air of imperious nonchalance, in view of the fact that she was keeping the boat waiting, amused Courtland Hardy, as he stood there leaning against the rail and looking down from the high deck. Now that she had smiled at him, he conceded to her the right to keep the boat waiting, though he would have insisted that the concession was rather a tribute to her beauty than her rank.

The sailors stood ready to pull the plank aboard, the passengers were grumbling in all languages seemingly, save English, and the fiery little captain there on the bridge was biting his nether lip and clenching his fists, but did not say a word. He would have been foolish indeed to affront Romanova, a word from whom could mysteriously deprive him of his position, no matter how efficient he may have proved himself.

"By Jove, but she's a thoroughbred!" mused Courtland Hardy, as she came down the bank leisurely, tall, slender and exquisitely graceful, with a languid movement that somehow suggested cultured restraint. A Russian of the purest type, her complexion was marvellous, her hair the

colour of ripe wheat. Her eyes were a laughing blue, and her features, though noble, yet were of that Slav type by virtue of which the Russian peasant claims kin with his czar. She was attired in a travelling costume of light blue and a hat of expensive straw, daintily trimmed with cornflowers—a Paris confection, by the way—one of those simple, effective creations of which no man knoweth the price, whether it be seventy-five cents or seventy-five dollars. Over her left shoulder she twirled carelessly a parasol of brilliant hue, imported from Yokohama.

Directly in front of the Princess the little fat old woman in black puffed frantically. She stepped upon the plank and teetered timidly up the precarious incline, a comical figure, antiquely coquettish. The Princess stopped about two feet from the shore end, and, smiling demurely, danced upon tiptoe, balancing herself by means of the gaudy parasol and the long tiger lilies. The result, if one could overlook its slight suggestion of cruelty, was highly satisfactory from a comedy standpoint, as the audience upon the boat enthusiastically testified. The fat little old lady did not fall off the plank, but her efforts to stay on, and the upward speed which she made despite those efforts, were grotesque in the extreme. She suggested one of those semi-aquatic birds that cannot fly, but yet attain great speed upon land by flapping rudimentary wings. was her voluble indignation, expressed in fluent German and bad Russian, when she at last stepped upon the hot metal deck, less diverting. Romanova flashed one merry glance—a fleeting vision of white teeth and mischievous blue eyes—at her audience, and then came fearlessly up the plank, again the graceful and haughty aristocrat.

### 100 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

Hardy was sure that her eyes lingered on his for a moment, as though she recognized in him a congenial spirit who could share a joke with her. The sense of humour is the widest freemasonry which the world knows.

The only other incident worth recording happened at night, after all the passengers had retired. A party of hidden marauders fired upon the boat, and one of the bullets passed through Hardy's cabin window. That they were Chinese was evident from a war arrow, with its iron point, that was found sticking to the rail the next morning.

"They are becoming very restless," said Smulders, in his broken English. "But they will hardly dare much to do"; and he pointed to a long line of dusty Cossacks that were trotting along the military

road that skirts the Amur. "The river is well guarded, and if they make depredations, the Cossacks take terrible vengeance. I am glad that

they did not hit my Chulia."

Julia was the name of the Viennese singer, with whom Smulders was fast becoming infatuated.

A little way below Vlagovestchensk they passed the blackened ruins of Aigun, the once populous Chinese city which the Cossacks destroyed not very long ago.

"They found the bodies of four thousand men, women and children in the ruins," explained Smulders. "And into the river they thousands driven have. That scare the Chinese, but they also not like it much."

"I should think," said Hardy, "that they would be vexed at such treatment, to say the least."

He looked carefully at his rifle and pistol that very day.

### CHAPTER XV

#### AGROUND IN THE AMUR

THE blackened ruins of Aigun and its grizzly story of men and women slain in that swoop of the Cossacks; that awful picture of fire, slaughter and rapine, and the thousands trampled by horses, cut down by the sword, or driven to death in the turgid Amur, illustrated in Hardy's mind one phase of the advance of Russian civilization; another and more pleasing phase was symbolized by the large white gymnasium of Vlagovestchensk, the first building of that progressive modern city that could be seen from the decks of the Alexsay.

Several hours were passed in Vlagovestchensk, during which Hardy and Smulders tore about in a droshky, and here it was that the former began to get an idea of that growth and commercial activity of which Emery had spoken so enthusiastically; for Vlagovestchensk has wide streets and department stores, is lighted by electricity, and is rapidly growing, as was attested by the large number of new buildings in progress of erection.

The imperial mail steamer, upon which they embarked about dark, was a considerably smaller boat than the *Alexsay*, and of lighter draught. There were only six first-class cabins, all forward, and the poor Princess was obliged to squeeze into three of these, the military governor of Irkutsh taking the other three. Hardy managed to secure an upper berth in a second-class cabin aft, but was soon driven

out of this, as the Russian beneath him smoked some filthy brand of cigarettes all night, lighting these every five minutes with old-fashioned sulphur matches, the acrid fumes of which, mingled with the smoke, arose in a stifling cloud to his nostrils, and filled the entire cabin. The Russian, much to Hardy's surprise, kept the door and window tightly closed, and, though he arose several times to open one or the other, his fellow-passengers immediately shut it again.

He arose at last, dressed, and went out upon deck, taking his blankets with him. The air was balmy, and he soon fell asleep, lulled by the breathing of the engine and the whispering of the waters. But he was not allowed to enjoy his repose for long, for about midnight the passengers and baggage were changed over to another steamer that drew a trifle less water and was, unfortunately for the comfort of the passengers, all save the Princess and the general, of smaller holding capacity. This new steamer brought down the disquieting rumour that the Amur and the Shilka, which latter river formed the waterway higher up, were rapidly falling.

All night they were engaged at the work by the aid of bonfires, and Hardy was obliged to seize his own trunks and drag them across the decks and help lower them into the small boat. By the glare of the primitive illumination he could see the Romanova's triumphant and isolated crossing over, and could behold her standing upon the deck of the new ship, leaning upon the general's arm, watching with amused interest the grand scramble of the less fortunate rabble, to which he now belonged. He was even obliged to sling a great bundle upon his back and to drop it into the skiff, fully aware that he loomed as monstrous and clear as Achilles amid

the flames of burning Troy—though by no means so heroic. Never in his life did he realize the great gulf fixed between himself and the Princess so keenly as at that crucial moment. There is nothing romantic about a man's soiled linen.

Here, too, they took on a detachment of Bouriat cavalry, in faded, dirty and dusty uniforms, returning from some murderous and unrecorded raid into Manchuria. They seemed half Chinese and half North American Indian, and they swarmed upon every available portion of the deck, disposing themselves in compact rows, like sardines in a box.

They were off again at dawn, feeling their way cautiously now, to avoid the shallow places. There were six first-class cabins upon this boat also, Hardy learned, which were given over as a matter of course to the Princess and the general. Hardy, being plentifully supplied with money, through old Emery's liberality, made an effort to secure one of these; but his request, preferred through Smulders to the captain, who spoke a little German, was treated with polite surprise. Cabins on steamers, he learned, were obtained in Russia, like most other desirable things, through official influence. spectacle afforded by this new steamer, as seen by the light of the early dawn, was most picturesque. As she continued her course for several days, it was necessary for Hardy and Smulders to pre-empt places on the deck for lying down, for the time comes at last when a man must sleep; and not being provided, like a horse, with four legs "one on each corner," he finds it necessary to measure his length upon something.

The main body of the passengers, without reference to wealth or social position, were crowded together upon an upper deck beneath an awning.

There they seized upon places to lay down their blankets, and slept at night as neatly packed as sardines, or sat about all day rolling cigarettes, playing cards and gossiping in twenty different languages. It was a dappled, conglomerate scene, a medley of strange costumes, bright handkerchiefs tied about feminine heads, long boots, blouses, ribbons of Little Russia, Tartars, Bouriats, Germans, French, moujiks, Jews-and one American. From the rafters of the awning hung a most extraordinary assortment of personal belongings: cavalry sabres, loaves of black bread, bundles of Chinese arrows from Aigun, boots, bottles, tiny samovars, hams, half-eaten fish, gaudy flowers. Every inch, available and unavailable, on roof and floor, had been seized. F. Courtland Hardy, excotillon leader, occupied a space two feet wide and six long, between the florid-faced and cheerful German and a Bouriat cavalryman.

Smulders was returning to Amsterdam from Port Arthur, whither he had taken out a dredger for a Dutch company. He knew one Russian word, "Peevo"—beer, and he descended frequently to the bar on the deck below and yelled "Peevo! peevo!" so loudly that he could be heard all over the ship. The Bouriat sat patiently for twenty hours on a stretch, looking at the tips of his long cavalry boots. While sleeping, Hardy turned his face toward the German as the lesser of two evils.

Among the other passengers was a tea merchant, who had a cargo from China in the hold, which he was moving across the vast continent, for shipment to England; the opera troupe from Vladivostok—pretty Viennese girls for the most part; exiles whose terms were expired; Europeans looking for mines; noisy students on their way to Moscow.

Smulders and Chulia talked together for hours, and even sang duets. The girl was coquettish and nearly drove him to desperation, causing him to sigh deeply and exclaim: "I love her very heavy, but she will not much, so what can I do? So I think I drink a little." Whereat he would wade through a sea of heads, plunge down to the bar below and shout "Peevo!"

The incident of the plank and the fat old lady so interested Hardy that he devoted much of his time to watching for the Romanova to appear on the little first-class deck forward, where she walked up and down, attired in cool, bewitching costumes, or talked with the general.

He was now so downcast that he no longer sought for the morning smile and the nod, which had been accorded him during those pleasant days on the Alexsay.

The fact that he was travelling third-class made him feel like an emigrant, immeasurably separated from the fair creature over there with the gods. He was in no mood to reflect that the question of funds had not entered into his choice of a third-class passage. Here he was among the Bouriats and moujiks and there was she, the sort of woman he was accustomed to, separated from him by a great gulf.

And patiently the steamer forged ahead through vast stretches of solitude, unutterably lonely; past interminable forests. After many hours they would come to a Cossack village, perched on a bluff, a few square log houses with white window frames, But this was always on the Siberian side, on the right. On the Manchurian bank there was no sign of human habitation or life, for the dread Russian bear stood growling just across the swift, yellow river, and the Chinese had taken their families and

vanished. From time to time long rafts drifted past, carrying emigrants with their families, their horses and cattle, to the land in this vast solitude, promised them by their father, the Czar. Sad, wondering women sat in the doors of the tiny huts built upon the logs, with their children clamouring about their knees, while the men stood at the corners with huge paddles guiding the clumsy craft. The cattle loomed large and monstrous in the uncertain light of the evening or the early dawn, as though they were standing upon the water itself. Hardy was saddened by the sight of these people, going they knew not where, nor to what—going down stream with no hope of ever coming up again.

"Yes," mused Hardy, as he gazed sorrowfully at one of these rafts, "I am a brother to the emigrant and the exile. Poor exile! not gifted to cope with his fellows in the universal battle of greed, too generous to hold fast, like the Jew, to the few pennies which fall into his palm, he is driven forth to the uttermost parts of the earth. Covered wagons carry him to far Dakota and the wilds of Assiniboine; he sleeps on the decks of steamers that climb the wide and muddy Amur. He is crowded in the foul holds of great Atlantic liners—and his little children wonder and cry. And ever in his heart there is a dream of a home and of liberty in some promised land—and ever a yearning that will not die for the cottage of his birth, and the tongue of his mother's lullabies!"

It was necessary now to test the depth of the water constantly. Two men, on either side of the prow, sounding by means of stakes attached to ropes, swayed rythmically as they cast their wooden spears, chanting the depth. "Chetyre, chetyre-polovena, pyat!" (Four, four and a half, five!)

As often as a down-coming steamer passed, the little captain made a trumpet of his hands and shouted:—
"How much water is there in the Shilka?"

The disquieting rumour that the water was rapidly falling was gaining confirmation by each report. Once the men with the poles cried, "Tres-polovena" (three and a half), and the steamer scraped on the bottom. At Pokrovka, a dreary Cossack village near the junction of the Amur and the Shilka rivers, they found a smaller mail boat waiting them that drew but three feet of water. They changed over again, with a multilingual hullabaloo and a grand scramble for places—all save the governor and Princess, who moved leisurely into the firstclass cabins like the superior beings that they were. Hardy still clung to Smulders as the most promising material for one wall of his sleeping apartment. For the other, by the way, he could not do better now than to secure the smoke-stack. They got off at noon and were immediately attacked by an immense drove of flies of the size of small bumble bees, and having two fierce projecting mandibles, white as ivory and plainly visible. For several hours Hardy forgot the Princess and even his home-sickness. Life contained no possible interest, save the repelling of these enthusiastic boarders, as the slightest relaxation of vigilance meant a sharp pain and a nasty sore. At night, however, when the great Siberian moon was shining brightly upon the long silver ribbon of water and the dim, untenanted solitudes, and the faithful engine was breathing softly, like a huge behemoth swimming up the stream, he found himself wondering if she could dance, and if a merchant in Russia had any social standing.

Then he would sigh at the reflection that in any case after Stretinsk, he would never see her again.

The next day they stuck fast on a sand-bank, and a boat's crew carried the anchor far up the river and dropped it, attached to a stout hawser. Then, by means of the windlass, they deliberately warped the steamer loose. At dark of the same day they grounded for good in two and a half feet of water, a few yards below a great tramp steamer firmly imbedded athwart the channel. There was no hope of going either up or down for many days to come. The peasants took the matter philosophically. They would simply live where they were, rent free, buying their bread and milk of the Cossacks. When God saw fit to send water they would go on.

## CHAPTER XVI

#### A THRILLING RESCUE

**DUT** what would the general do, the military governor of Irkutsk? For, as everybody knew, he must be at his post on a certain date, and the White Czar is not apt to take the will of God Within two days the general's inteninto account. tions were made manifest, for his orderly arrived with several long dug-outs, each having a mast at the prow. A rope, fastened at the stern, was passed through a pulley at the top of the mast and the other end attached to a shaggy horse. The governor's baggage was piled into one of these dug-outs, and he seated himself comfortably in the midst. A moujik with a paddle occupied the stern, another mounted the horse, and they rode off, the animal scrambling over the stones by the shore or splashing through the shallow water, while the man with the paddle kept the boat clear of the bank. This is the ancient mode of ascending Russian rivers, the method of "loshat and lotka," and two military stations or about thirty miles can thus be made under favourable circumstances, by getting under way at four o'clock in the morning.

To Hardy's consternation, the Princess and her maid followed in a second dug-out. But there were two more waiting on the bank, their owners hoping that others of the passengers would wish to avail themselves of their use.

"Come on," cried Hardy to Smulders. "Let's follow them. It will be a lark,"

"A lark? What's that?"

"A lark? Why, fun, sport."

But Smulders sighed and shook his head, thinking of the fair Viennese. "Ah no," he said, "I care not if it be an eagle. I cannot leave Chulia. I loaf her too heavy."

Hardy lost no time. By signs he conveyed to one of the sailors that he wished his luggage carried ashore and piled into a dug-out. Soon he, too, was seated in the bottom, reclining gracefully against his impedimenta, his horse scrambling along in the wake of the Princess's lotka. It was an exhilarating method of travel, combining novelty with an element of danger productive of excitement. No one tipped over, it is true; but the American considered it a marvel that these narrow pig-troughs and their towering piles of baggage should remain upright for a moment. The voluble wrangle that went on, moreover, between the two moujiks at the extreme ends of the tow-line, and the gurgling of the current rushing past at the rate of six miles an hour, contributed liveliness and even an impression of speed. Sometimes, when the water was shallow, the horses waded a quarter of a mile from the shore, with a wide expanse of yellow river on either hand; and if they came to a deep place the little animals plunged boldly in, swimming silently, with nothing but their heads and half of the postilions' bodies above water.

They made but one military station the first day, a large square building, where a samovar is kept always ready for travellers and the sledges that carry the mails over the ice in winter. To Hardy's delight the old general and the Princess were extremely courteous to him, and made him understand by signs that he was welcome. The general's

orderly foraged and produced some black bread, some milk and a quantity of delicious fresh caviar of the kind the Russians do not export.

The Princess presided charmingly at the samovar, after which she disappeared for the night. Hardy spread his blankets upon the floor and was soon fast asleep. But he seemed no sooner to have closed his eyes than he was awakened again by the voice of the general shouting at him in Russian.

It was only three o'clock, but the place was all a-bustle with preparations for departure. Ere the mists had risen from the river they were again under way, dim as ghosts. Hardy reclined against his luggage and slept deliciously until the sun arose, when he was awakened by the stinging of a cloud of gnats. Sitting upright, he noticed that the lotka of the Princess was deserted by its fair passenger. Casting his eyes about, he observed maid and mistress strolling along the government road that follows the course of the Shilka and serves as the channel for the stream of Cossacks that is being poured into Manchuria. The bank was high at this point, and the women were above him, plainly visible in the bright sun. The Romanova, twirling her Japanese parasol upon her shoulder, walked rapidly and with a joyous freedom of motion that testified to her love of the open air.

"I wonder if she plays golf?" mused Hardy, and at that very moment he perceived that he, too, was cramped, sitting there in the boat. He got out, accordingly, and struck vigorously across a wide stretch of sand deposited during high water. He was some fifteen minutes climbing the steep bank, and when he at last reached the road the Princess was nowhere to be seen. Indeed, the road at this point turned sharply away from the river

and disappeared around the foot of a hill. knew, however, that it must wind back to the river, and he therefore followed the wide, dusty trail confidently, although it seemed to plunge into the heart of the wilderness. Once or twice he asked himself why he was walking so rapidly, and each time made answer: "Why, to keep up with my lotka, of course." He was too thorough a gentleman to admit to himself that he was pursuing the Princess: he would not have done such a thing in Beacon Street; why should he do it on a government road in Siberia? At any rate, it would be an indiscreet thing to do, as she would be sure to crush him for his presumption. But he certainly had just as good a right to get out and walk as she. As he was soliloquizing thus, and had about come to the conclusion that he was in a fair way at last of making an ass of himself, he thought he heard a shrill scream in the distance. Listening, with his heart in his mouth, he was sure, for the first cry was followed by others—wild, despairing shrieks, as of a woman in the most excruciating fear.

"Coming! Coming!" shouted Hardy, and feeling in his pocket for the general's American pistol, which, thank God! was there, he ran as he never ran before. Rounding a little turn in the road and a clump of trees, he came suddenly upon a sight that thrilled him with rage and sickened him with fear—not for himself, but for the Princess. There she was, struggling in the arms of a big Chinaman, one of those tall, fierce creatures who inhabit the wild regions of Manchuria. The beast had lifted her in his arms and was running towards the woods with her, while another carried the maid. Two other Mongolians, with long war bows in their hands, completed the strange picture. Hardy shouted

again, and the four Chinamen wheeled about and regarded him with startled malignancy that turned on the instant to amusement. Those four great brutes beheld one rather small, dark man, of dapper appearance, despite his week's river travel—a slender, dark man in a blue serge suit and negligé shirt, who mechanically adjusted his gold pince-nez as he advanced at a slower gait. The two Chinamen with war bows fitted long arrows to the strings, and with a sudden lift of the left foot and widening of the arms they let drive. One arrow whizzed by Hardy's head and the other pierced his clothing, making a nasty scratch on his left side. Then the pistol cracked twice and the two Chinamen fell sprawling, with bullets through their bodies. The other two promptly dropped the fainting women and started to run. Hardy aimed deliberately at the one who had seized the Princess, and fired. It was a long shot, but the bullet took effect, as a scream of pain testified.

Neither the Princess nor the maid evinced any signs of reviving, but lay there huddled upon the ground as though dead. Hardy ran to the edge of the bluff and there, as good fortune would have it, was the general's lotka, and the general himself strolling along leisurely upon the sand. The American shouted so loudly, and flung his arms about so wildly that the orderly, the two moujiks, and even the governor himself were soon scrambling up the steep bank towards him. The Romanova had revived by the time they all reached her, and sat in the tall grass doing up her abundant hair, woman fashion, and looking about with awakening eyes. She was pale as a ghost and held out her hands appealingly. Hardy and the general helped her to her feet, and it was the American who sup-

ported her until her trembling limbs regained their strength. The general surveyed the dead Chinamen, and then, standing squarely in front of Hardy, removed his cap and made a low bow.

#### CHAPTER XVII

#### A GRATEFUL PRINCESS

T the next station they found a small govern-A T the next station they some foot of water.

ment boat that drew but one foot of water. It had been sent down by the authorities to pick up the governor, and Courtland Hardy, ex-cotillon leader, was taken on board and given one of the four cabins all to himself, although one of the greatest heiresses in all Russia was thereby com-

pelled to occupy a room with her maid.

: i

The Princess was sitting on one of the benches of the upper deck, attired in the costume of Little Russia, with the Japanese parasol, turned toward the sun, over her shoulder. Hardy had rather avoided her since the incident of the brigands, as he felt that any attempt at familiarity on his part would be taking advantage of the service which he had been able to render her—a service, he assured himself, which he would have performed just as eagerly for the humblest peasant woman on the boat. The Romanova, in fact, had been nearly prostrated since that dreadful happening, remaining in her cabin until now, under the care of her maid.

"Monsieur," she said to Hardy, who was promenading the little deck. He threw away his cigar, removed his hat and bowed very low. He noticed that she was still pale, and that her eyes looked unnaturally large. "Parlez vous Francais, Monsieur?" she asked sweetly, with a perfect Parisian

accent.

"Un peu, madame," he replied, "but unfortu-

nately, very badly."

"Ah, but you do speak it!" she cried, with animation, "you speak it well, or at least well enough to enable me to express to you my undying gratitude. I owe you my life, Monsieur! Pray, sit down here beside me. I owe you my escape from a horrible, a hideous fate."

Hardy sat beside her on the bench.

"You owe me nothing, madame," he said, "there was no great danger for me, really. Thethe obligation is all on my side. There is not a moujik or Bouriat on the boat who would not have done the same thing. They are all envious of my great good fortune.

"I owe you, nevertheless, my life," she insisted, "and you have my undying gratitude, as I said. I do not know how I shall ever be able to repay

you!"

Hardy frowned.

"I did not do it with any thought of repayment, madame," he said, "of any kind. You will best recompense me if you will dismiss all thought of obligation. It would pain me to think that I had imposed any such imaginary burden upon you. am more than repaid in my own satisfaction. trust that you are quite recovered from the shock." "But, you were wounded! The general tells me that you were wounded. Do not deny it," she commanded, smiling. "The entire boat knows of it. It is fortunate the arrow was not poisoned."

" Not wounded," replied Hardy,

scratched."

The Princess fixed her eyes upon him for several

"I have always insisted," she murmured, "that

the American gentlemen compare favourably with those of any country in the world, and now I know it. Pray do me the honour to sit here and talk with me awhile. We will change the subject, if you desire. How do you like our Russia?"

Hardy talked with her for an hour or so. spoke slowly and distinctly for him, and under such delightful auspices, he found his French a much more practical and useful acquirement than he had thought. They talked of the increasing activity of the Chinese marauders, of the possibility of war with Japan, of the wild flowers of Siberia, of Russian and American society. He found her intensely patriotic, and firm in the belief that Russia could crush Japan in a month should hostilities actually break out.

As they were thus engaged in conversation, the general approached, and, bowing before the Princess, proposed zakouska to Hardy.

"Ah, monsieur," she laughed, "do you know the

great Russian institution of zakouska?"

"Yes," he replied; "it was about the first Russian word that I learned, and I have heard it more frequently than any other since."

"Then," she said, rising and taking the general's arm, "we will have zakouska in my cabin. Will you do us the honour of joining us?"

"Certainly," replied Hardy with alacrity,

find it a most delightful custom!"

And all day long they steamed up the winding and yellow Amur, through virgin solitudes of rolling prairie, through interminable stretches of primaeval forest, with mediaeval Russia on the right, and ancient, prehistoric China on the left.

That evening Hardy watched a glorious sunset with the Princess, glancing furtively now and then

at the rapt, beautiful face, the great blue eyes dilated, the pretty mouth slightly open with wonder. The sun was hidden behind a pile of dark clouds that were banked against the west. Below these and the horizon line was a wide ribbon of bright saffron. into which the disk suddenly dropped, a ball of changing radiance, dull gold, burnished copper, ruddy orange. Just as it disappeared, it became a conflagration, the flames of which flared out, leaving the clouds rolling up like smoke. The saffron ribbon was now edged with a narrow strip of gleaming quicksilver, the clouds at the left glowed with indescribable beauties of purple and orange, while those banked above gleamed through their rifts with such fires as burn in the transparencies of an opal. The Princess sighed, and her eyes sought those of the American, and thus those too stood looking at each other in silence.

"I think," she said at last, "that there are no such gorgeous sunsets anywhere in the world as here on our Amur. N'est ce pas, monsieur?"

"This is certainly the most beautiful that I have ever seen," he replied with conviction.

But though the sun had set, the light did not fade from the sky, and at nine o'clock people could still be seen upon the steamer reading with no difficulty. And now the river itself became a ribbon of lilac laid fluttering upon the dark green of the fields—a ribbon of lilac that slowly faded, while the delicious aroma of millions of wild flowers, mingling their fragrant breaths on the evening breeze, was distinctly perceptible.

The hills sloped abruptly to the water's edge, and their pine-covered slopes were sharply reflected in the river below.

The grinding and jarring of the little steamer upon

the sand became now a matter of hourly occurrence. Occasionally a large river boat would be passed, high foundered and dry, either deserted or occupied by a few passengers, patiently waiting for the water to rise. Many row boats drifted by, laden with more fortunate people, going with the swift current rather than against it. To these the captain shouted continually:—

"How is the water in the Shilka?" and ever came the same reply, "Falling, slowly falling."

At midnight they ran upon a sandbank, and had such difficulty getting off that Hardy thought they were stuck for good. It was necessary to wake up the passengers, with the exception of her Highness the Princess, and drive them all over to one side of the boat, to list her. After an hour of most exciting work, during which the captain dashed forward and back upon the bridge, gesticulating with his entire body and shouting like a madman, they got off and were under way again, only to make another hour's stop for wood. This time, as before, a bewhiskered moujik was sitting on the bank by a flaring fire. He could be seen very distinctly from a great distance, and as the steamer approached, the officer in command shouted at him again and again. The soundness with which he was sleeping, with head upon breast and arms folded upon knees, gave rise to considerable amusement among such of the passengers as were awake. The plank was laid and several of the crew ran up to him. One of them pushed him and he sprawled over.

"He's dead!" announced the sailor.

" Dead ? "

"Yes, sir, transfixed by an arrow."

He put his foot upon the man's breast and, seizing something, pulled. A moment later he held up in

the light of the bonfire a Chinese war arrow; then, throwing it to the earth, he stooped and wiped his

hand upon the grass.

Toward morning they stuck upon the sand again, in a wide part of the river, with dense forests upon either bank. They drifted about and blocked up a narrow channel through which they were attempting to pass. The sand came level with the surface of the water on either hand. The captain tried in vain all the expedients known upon the Amur; he attempted to lift the boat around by means of a mast planted at her side in the river; he sent the anchor up stream, and essayed to drag her through boldly by means of the windlass; he added to his power the pulling force of a wooden windlass, set up on one bank of the river, whose long cross-bar was manned by half the boat's crew, but in vain.

"What is the matter?" the Princess, coming out upon the deck about nine o'clock in the morning,

asked Hardy.

"We are stuck for good," he explained. "I

hope you slept well?"

"Excellently, thank you! But I hope we are not stranded, as I have invited some friends to a house party, to my country place near Moscow!"

A rowboat drifted into the mouth of the channel, and lodged against the side of the steamer. It contained four dead, one of whom was a priest, in long robes. He was lying flat upon his back, with his head lolling horribly over the side, his venerable beard floating upon the water. All were pierced with arrows. The general offered the Princess his arm, and he conducted her below.

"Zakouska?" he said, patting her hand.

#### CHAPTER XVIII

#### BORIS ROMANOFF ARRIVES

THE method of loshat and lotka was out of the question now, even for the military governor of Irkutsk. The wild bandits of Manchuria, who respect no government on earth, and whose only patriotic sentiment consists in the fact that they would rather kill a Russian than any other "foreign devil," were aroused and were thirsting for loot and vengeance. It would be courting death to go up that river unless escorted by a troop of cavalry. Moreover, it was the duty of every man about the boat to remain by the Princess's side. Reinforcements were sure to arrive in the shape of moujiks or Bouriats who, impatient of remaining on the stranded steamer below, had pushed on afoot or by lotka. There was always the chance, too, that a squad of Cossack cavalrymen might come along, following the military road, a long stretch of which was visible from the boat, between the skirts of the forest and the edge of the river.

Besides Hardy and the general and the captain, there were on board five members of the crew. Weapons could be provided for all of these. The captain took a hurried inventory, and found that there was enough food to last all hands, with economy, five days. As the first day wore on, an occasional horseman could be seen on the Manchurian side, in the dim foreground of the forest. These appeared singly at first, then in twos, and finally

122

in groups of three or four. They were evidently increasing in numbers and collecting in the vicinity of the stranded steamer. Towards evening Smulders and his "Chulia" came along. The German had persuaded the Viennese to embark with him in a lotka, and they had made nearly as great progress as the steamer, with its frequent delays on account of the sandbanks and the necessity of taking on wood. They had come on perfectly unconscious of danger, and probably owed their immunity therefrom to the fact that they had stuck close to the Siberian side, to which the Chinese did not often cross over.

"We vill stay here," declared Smulders, when Hardy explained to him the danger of continuing the journey, "and I vill fight for my Chulia till I

die."

"How is your suit coming on?" asked Hardy, smiling. "She must like you pretty well, or she

would not come up the river with you."

"Ah, she would have come up mit a Russian, so I come along mit the only lotka, and she have to come mit me. She vill not much, and I have no peevo, so I think I go mad. Ach, I loaf her very heavy!"

Nothing happened that night, save the arrival of four Bouriats, riding by turns a very tired and incredibly bony horse. After a shouted conversation with the captain two of them mounted the animal and rode out to the boat. They were armed with short rifles and heavy cavalry swords. They turned the horse loose, which swam to shore, and was used by the other two as a living ferry, one riding this time while the other held to the animal's

In the morning six Manchurians rode down to the water's edge and began firing at the boat. The distance was long and they shot wildly, not putting Hardy and his friends in any great danger, though they made their intentions perfectly plain. The Princess Romanova, attired in a gown of light blue, and a hat trimmed with blue flowers, stood by the general's side eyeing the scene with calm interest. twirling her open parasol carelessly upon her

"I think you had better go below, madame," said Hardy, "a stray shot might hit you."

"There is no danger," she replied; "they cannot hit the boat, and they are great cowards; they dare not come nearer. If you could wound one of them, they would all run away."

Hardy glanced at her admiringly.

"The range is too long," he replied, fingering his rifle affectionately and familiarly. "If they would come a little closer, now, we might teach them a lesson. That big fellow, riding up and down before them, seems to be the leader."

"Don't you think you could hit him?" she asked. "I have great faith in your marksmanship-very

naturally.

"Not at this distance, and I find no amusement in shooting unless I am pretty sure of my mark."

As they stood looking, reinforcements arrived to the Chinamen from time to time. Other horsemen rode out from the depths of the woods, till, in the course of an hour, the strength of the company had increased from six to twenty. Hardy became convinced that the Chinamen intended to attack when their numbers should become sufficiently great, and here, by a strange freak of chance, he found himself actively involved in the ancient and unending war between Russia and Asia; mixed up in a fight to the death which was as much his fight as it was the

captain's or the general's, or that of any sailor or Bouriat on board. For it was his duty to defend to the last drop of blood in his body, and with all his remarkable skill, the fair, imperious, high-spirited lady who stood by his side. And, even though he was face to face with desperate danger, perhaps with a horrible death, he felt a fierce joy in being there. He did not know whether or not she knew that he was a tradesman, a mere hireling, who was scarcely better than a clerk. He had not told her, and he did not care. At Stretinsk he would begin that life. Now, and till then, he was her knighterrant, and she should not be ashamed of him.

"Will you," he said to the Princess, "make a slight suggestion to the general from me? I make it in all humility."

She looked at him inquiringly, and he explained. As a result, some of the men were set to work dragging up mattresses and bedding and piling them against the rail to form a barricade. This work was not more than half completed when the brigands made their first attack. Emboldened by the accession of half a dozen recruits, they deployed in a long line, and swinging their rifles about their heads, they came galloping on through the shallow water of the river, the chief well in advance. The general gave a quick sharp order, and his little army fell upon their knees behind the half-finished barricade, upon the top of which they rested their rifles.

Evidently, being a good soldier, he had ordered the men not to fire till the enemy should get quite close. Smulders had no rifle, but he seized a stout boat hook, shod with a sharp iron point, and sank upon his knees shouting:—

"They shall never get my Chulia!"

On came the wild line, splashing through the water,

which was up to the horses' knees. When they had traversed about one third of the distance, they stopped and deliberately took aim. The general spoke sharply to the Princess, who sat down upon the deck behind the barricade. At this moment the brigands fired, and several of the bullets passed over the boat and splashed in the water on the farther side. One struck the smoke-stack with a "pluff," and another, evidently flattened by its impact with the water, hummed musically. The old general stood erect, without flinching, repeating some order to his men. His voice sounded affectionate, almost caressing.

Hardy raised the sight of his rifle and measured

off the distance with his eye.

"What does he say?" he asked of the Princess, kneeling by her.

"Not yet, my children, not yet!"

"Now," said the American, "you can do something for me, if you will! I think I can hit the chief now! Ask the general as a special favour to you to let me try!"

The Manchurians sat silent upon their horses, shading their eyes with their hands to see, if possible, the result of their volley. The Princess ran to the general and spoke hurriedly to him, and the latter turned and nodded at Hardy. The American adjusted his pince-nez and raised his rifle to his shoulder. It was a long shot, but he had done better in the Adirondacks at deer. His nerves were good and his muscles as tense as steel. Just as he was about to press the trigger, the chief swung his rifle about his head, pointed at the boat and came plunging on again. This was a more difficult matter, as the man was in motion. Yet he was a splendid mark, looming big and dark there against

the bright water, with a dash or two of vivid colour about him, evidently ribbons or a sash.

Hardy shot and the chief still came on, followed by his men, shouting like wild Indians, in their barbaric tongue.

The American shot again without result.

Then he swore softly, a good honest, Saxon oath, removed his eye-glasses, wiped his eyes with his handkerchief, replaced the glasses, laid his cheek to his weapon and shot a third time. The chief's rifle dropped into the yellow Amur, his arms fell to his side, and he plunged over his horse's flank, head first into the water. The animal whirled about and charged upon the line behind him, dragging his rider's body, that hung by one stirrup. The other brigands turned, and, following their leader's body to the bank, disappeared into the dark Manchurian woods.

The Princess approached Hardy and extended her hand.

"I congratulate you again, monsieur," she said,

"upon your splendid marksmanship."

"I take your hand, madame," replied Hardy, "but I cannot accept the congratulations. It was very bad shooting. My only excuse is that this is the first time I have used this rifle."

Smulders dropped his boathook to the deck, and running up to the American, seized both his hands in fat, pink palms.

"You have saved my Chulia!" he sobbed.

There was indeed no further attack on the part of the Chinese that afternoon, and at night, before the moon arose, the besieged received an important recruit. A man heard shouting from the Russian side was allowed to approach and come on board. Hardy could not see his face, as lights were not allowed on deck, but he thought he recognized the voice, even though it was speaking Russian. The newcomer went below immediately, and, half an hour after his arrival, Hardy was summoned to the Princess's cabin.

"Mr. Hardy," she said in French, "this is my cousin, Boris Romanoff. I take pleasure in introducing two brave men to each other. Mr. Hardy has saved my life, and Boris has braved the most fearful dangers to reach my side. When he arrived at Vladivostok, and inquired for me, he learned that I had started for Moscow, so he did not wait a moment, but fairly flew up the river. Had he known what gallant defenders were already by my side, he would not have felt such anxiety."

Hardy took this last remark as simply complimentary to himself and the brave old general, and he acknowledged it by a polite bow; how could he know that Boris Romanoff was a suitor for his fair cousin's hand, who was a cousin far removed, after all, and that the Princess often tried the big fellow's temper in the most insiduous and seemingly innocent

ways?

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Hardy," said Romanoff, "I hardly hoped to meet you again in Russia. I feared you would not be able to break away from the fascinations of the geisha girls, who

so strongly appealed to you."

"I believe that you played a scoundrelly trick on me in Japan," said Hardy, looking Romanoff coolly in the eye, and speaking with great calmness, "but I am content for the present to pass it by. I ah—suppose you have your own code as a gentleman. According to mine, it is our duty now to sink all private differences and unite in the rescue of this lady from a most perilous position."

"You're right," replied Romanoff, becoming insolent, "an addition to the crew is not to be despised at a time like this, especially of a fellow who can shoot as you can. You ought to open a gallery in Petersburg. You'd make your fortune." He turned his back rudely, but looked over his shoulder to add: "But let us have no misunderstanding. Nothing you can do here will prevent my finding out why the Japanese were so friendly to you and what you are really doing in Russia."

#### CHAPTER XIX

#### THE FLIGHT OF BURNING ARROWS

N deck all was silence save for the whispering, bubbling and plashing of the treacherous Amur, or the occasional cry of some lone water fowl, high overhead, following the course of the river. Hardy, coming above after his interview with Romanoff, found the general on watch. Two of the men also were awake, and were listening and peering into the darkness with a vigilance which proved that they understood that their own as well as the lives of all on board depended on their alert-The American also listened, and watched, straining his eyes to see if here and there in the darkness darker forms could be seen of the foe stealthily Often as he thus gazed he was approaching. tricked by illusion and seemed to see a hideous Mongolian face leering up from the surface of the river close by. Once or twice he raised his rifle, as if to fire, but even as he did so the inky blackness of the water would wash out the lying yellow patch with its evil eyes.

Then, too, it was easy to hear in imagination the splashing of feet and of swimming or wading bodies among the infinite sounds of the broad river, as it fretted about the points of sandbars, washed over shallows, or gurgled rapidly through deep channels.

The American needed no one to tell him, and no experience in warfare to make him understand, that this was a most critical moment in the fortunes of the little party. Should the Chinamen attack now, they would experience no difficulty in getting

quite close to the boat without detection, and if they came in sufficient force they should be able to swarm over her side and overpower her few defenders.

And as this thought entered his head, he realized that he was listeneng for another sound—a sound that would fill him with joy: and that was the beating of horses' hoofs on the military road skirting the Siberian bank, and the faint jingling of steel accourtements.

Yes, the dreaded Cossack, the Cossack terrible and murderous, had now become a friend and brother, and would have been welcomed by this American as joyfully as were the Campbells at Lucknow.

But not even illusion brought any such pleasant sounds to his ears. Hardy had not been standing upon the deck over twenty minutes, when he felt a hand laid lightly upon his arm. It was so dark that he could not distinguish the outline of the form standing by his side, but he knew without looking around that this was the Princess.

"We must not speak aloud," she whispered, "the general has commanded absolute silence." He could feel her warm breath upon his cheek and her hair brushing his brow. "I came to say that you must not mind my cousin. I saw at a glance that he does not like you, and I think that I understand the reason."

"What possible reason could he have for not liking me?" asked Hardy. "I assure you that I never did him any intentional harm."

"He is very brave, is my poor cousin, and he is furious that it was you and not he who saved my life from the brigands. Bear with him, I beg of you. He will come to his senses in a day or two and will himself thank you."

"For your sake," whispered Hardy, "I will

endure anything from him, at least until we have rescued you from this danger."

A small hand crept down his arm, found his hand, and pressed it.

"Merci, mon ami!" whispered the Princess.

At this moment a plash was heard by the side of the boat.

"Go below!" said Hardy, in a voice of command -the voice that a real woman likes to hear sometimes from a real man, and he stepped lightly to the spot. He could see nothing, could hear nothing more, but he found the general standing at the place, which was on the down-stream side, gazing into the water. For the moment Hardy had confidently expected to see a throng of Chinamen climbing up the sides. If this plash had indicated the arrival of the enemy, however, there was nothing in the general's demeanour to betray the fact. He did not move, did not awake the sleeping crew, but turned with a sigh and crossed the deck. He was stopped by the Princess, who walked with him for a few seconds.

"He has sent one of the crew, Stenka Pugacheff, down the river for help. Brave Stenka! He hopes to get far enough in the darkness to escape the eyes of the brigands who are collected on the bank, and then he will take to the woods. Is he not a hero, this simple Cossack? It is thirty versts to the military station, and there is death waiting for him at every step."

"Their devotion to you makes them all heroes,

madame," replied Hardy,

"Ah, no! His devotion to his czar and his fatherland. He left a message for his sweetheart, Katinka Barsova, of the village of Kumanskaya. Would that I had known that he was going! If

anything happens to him, his sweetheart shall never know want while I live. That thought might have comforted him."

Hardy made no reply, but stood silent, watching and listening. He even moved a few steps away from the Princess, fearing that, by talking to her, instead of keeping guard, he might be imperilling her life. After a few moments she came to his side again, whispering:—

"Had you not better go below and sleep while you can? I can watch as well, and you will want to be strong, if there is fighting to be done. My cousin is sleeping—he could no longer keep awake. He had not closed his eyes for four days. Ah,

Blessed Virgin! What is that?"

A light flashed and went out thirty or forty yards below, and immediately a blazing object described an arc through the air and fell upon the deck not far from their feet. One glance was enough to show that the object was an arrow which, freighted with some highly inflammable material, was sticking upright in the deck and burning like a candle. It cast considerable light. Hardy leaped to snatch it, but ere he reached it, one of the Cossack soldiers anticipated him and threw the blazing missile into the river. Just as he was in the act of seizing it, several shots rang out and the man was slightly wounded in the arm, as was discovered later, for the brave fellow made no outcry at the time. general sprang to the Princess's side, took her by the arm and turned her toward the gangway, speaking kindly but firmly to her.

"Da, da!" she replied, and left the deck.

This first arrow was but the precursor of a shower of twenty or more, the majority of which either passed far over the vessel or fell short, thus proving that the accuracy of the first shot had been largely the result of a lucky guess. Even a boat, though it be a big mark, is a hard thing to hit in the dark. And this flight of arrows established one thing, namely, that these Chinamen were attacking from two sides only, from below and from Manchuria. The water, indeed, was too deep above and on the Siberian side for them to approach by wading. The entire band of defenders were on the alert now, and the general was giving orders which Hardy, of course, could not understand.

One of the arrows stuck fast in the rail, and a sailor broke it off by striking it with a long pole. The rifle volley of which it was the precursor did no damage, as most of the Russians were either lying upon their stomachs, or were crouching behind the improvised bulwark. There were evidently about twenty Chinamen shooting arrows, accompanied by from six to ten riflemen. If they were trying to set fire to the boat, or merely to light it up, so that they might pot at its occupants from the safety of the darkness, it soon became evident that their scheme was not destined to prove highly successful. The men, for one thing, made themselves plainly visible for an instant or so while they were scratching their matches and applying the burning arrows to the string.

They kept shooting, sporadically. First here and there and then in some other spot a red, fitful light would gleam for an instant, dyeing a patch in the river blood red by its radiance, and revealing a wild, savage-looking Mongolian, armed with great bow and quiver, who flickered into view for a moment

and as soon was swallowed up by darkness.

Hardy, not understanding the general's orders, reasoned that he would be pardoned for acting under his own. If he were going wrong, he reflected, it would be easy to stop him. He therefore held his

134

rifle ready for action, as a man who is expecting a covey of quail to rise, and stood watching the water alert, tense, keen as a cat about to spring. chance came soon, when one of those lights flashed nearly in the direction of his gaze and not far away. He threw the gun up to his shoulder and fired. He could not see the sights, but he could make out the object plainly, and he knew he should not go far wrong. He missed, for the Chinaman, standing about waist deep in the water, fitted the arrow to the string and discharged it. The shot rang out loud and clear. It seemed to Hardy that he had never heard a rifle make such a loud report before. The general exclaimed, "Monsieur Hardy. Ah!" and made no further comment, so the American continued his shooting-once, twice, three times. Meanwhile the attacking party seemed to be approaching a little nearer, and they succeeded in lodging several of their burning missiles in the woodwork of the boat: one in the rail, two in the side of the wheelhouse, and one in the hull. These were broken off almost as soon as they stuck, and did no damage, for, strange to say, the Chinamen themselves had ceased firing their rifles.

And now Hardy had the inexpressible joy of killing one of the attacking party, who fell backward

into the water with his blazing arrow in his hand.
"I'm getting the knack of it," he muttered,
"I shall be able to do it more frequently now.

Perhaps I alone can stop them."

A moment later he heard sudden shouting, the sound of running feet, snarls of rage and the splash of heavy bodies falling into the water. A party of Chinamen, who had crept down from above in row boats, were attempting to board, and the Bouriats and crew were repelling them savagely with the bayonet and with swords.

#### CHAPTER XX

#### ALL HANDS REPEL BOARDERS

THE burning arrows had been a diversion, as the books on tactics say, to draw the attention of the little band of defenders and occupy it completely on the down-stream side, while another attacking party crept up under cover of darkness and boarded from above. But for the fact that the wily old general, fearing the trick, had kept a guard stationed at that side, the ruse might have succeeded perfectly. The boat, as we have seen, was swung diagonally across a sort of channel, her nose and stern being embedded in sandbanks. The Chinamen, coming down stream in three row boats, struck her at either end and near the middle, their evident intention being to spread the Russians out as much as possible.

At this moment a frayed and worn old moon floated up out of the Siberian forest. Hardy saw by its light a wide expanse of water, dimly shining between ghostly forests; he saw several Mongolian heads, covered with round, black caps, looking over the side of the boat; he saw Julius Smulders whirl a heavy oak pole in the air and bring it down upon one of these heads with terrific force; he saw one of the Bouriats cleave another head so completely that one half stood erect for a second, while the other fell over the victim's shoulder, as the Bouriat wrenched at his sword, which was

imbedded in the rail; he saw a gigantic Manchurian, with a long two-handled sword leap aboard, to be thrust through by a bayonet lunge just as his feet struck the deck.

All this the American took in with one glance of the eye, just as the moon lifted her torch above the woods.

There were four of the crew, besides the captain, all armed with rifles to which bayonets had been affixed by the general's order. Add to these Smulders, the general himself, Hardy and three Bouriats, and the defending party consisted of twelve members. Brave Stenka Pugacheff, of the crew, had gone down the river for help, and the attack had been delivered so suddenly that there was no time to call Romanoff, who was sleeping below. Indeed, it is doubtful if, at that moment of extreme excitement, anybody thought of him.

The Chinamen were receiving a murderous and unlooked for reception, but they were not to be easily beaten off. Several of them gained the deck and began to swing their clumsy two-handled swords, and the clash of steel on steel rang out amid bestial grunts, snarls and cries of rage. The Cossack crew and the Bouriats fought like devils, leaping and darting about with the agility of wild cats, and handling their more modern weapons with murderous dexterity and skill.

A man never knows what sort of man he is till a supreme trial comes to him. The American found himself cool. His faculties were all at a state of extremest tension, with the result that he could see and hear better, think faster and decide more quickly than in ordinary moments. He took his revolver from his pocket and ran lightly toward a Manchurian who was just throwing one leg over

the rail. He fired at the man's head and he fell back into the water with a loud plash, dropping his sword upon the deck. Another leapt over the rail almost at his side, and swinging his great steel blade high in the air, chopped at Hardy's head. The latter threw up his rifle and received the blow upon the barrel. The impact brought him to his knees, but as he sank, he shot his assailant beneath the chin, killing him instantly.

At this moment a blazing arrow passed over him and stuck in one of the cotton-stuffed pillows that had been used as a barricade. Hardy snatched the pillow, threw it overboard and ran to the downstream side of the boat. The attack of the boarders had not lasted in all over four or five minutes, and yet at that time several of the wading party had approached considerably nearer. The moon gave sufficient light for him to see the sights of his rifle, and the dark forms of the Chinamen made conspicuous marks in the gleaming water. This was not over two or three inches deep on the sand in which the prow of the boat was imbedded, and two of the Chinamen were running close in. Hardy killed them both with his rifle and then began to shoot deliberately at those who were farther away, with such effect that he put the entire party to flight ere the ten remaining shots in his weapon were exhausted.

He turned to re-enter the *mêlée* just in time to see Boris Romanoff burst raging upon deck, wrench a two-handled sword from a dead Chinaman's fingers and ply it with as much ease and skill as though it were the lightest of rapiers. The attackers were gaining ground. Enough of them had come over the side to defend a portion of the rail, over which others were rapidly scrambling, while

138

several of their number were keeping the defending party so busy that they could not use their guns to shoot them down; which, indeed, they would have not been apt to do in any case, as Cossacks and Bouriats are primaeval fighters who do not think of shooting when brought to close quarters. Boris Romanoff charged with such deadly skill that the boarders leaped over the side, back into the water, leaving two of their number dead. The other brigands jumped after their comrades, with the exception of one, who was bayoneted in the back just as he jumped, and the rifle barrel, striking the rail, made a fulcrum of it, so that the weapon was wrenched from the owner's hands. The Russians now used their guns, shooting at the ten or twelve Chinamen who were scampering over the sandbars. They were ordinary shots, and of all this fusillade not one bullet took effect. The general soon stopped them, evidently not wishing them to waste their ammunition.

And now all was silence again, save for the rippling, plashing and whispering of the mighty Amur, as it rushed on between its dark forests, in the light of the waning moon. A dead body, swept past the stern of the boat by the current, rolled over the sandbar and floated down stream, and the American, as it caught his eye, shuddered and thought of the citizens of Aigun, and the thousands of Chinamen who had been driven into this same river by the Cossacks. How many a gruesome tale could the Amur tell, could its whisperings be understood; how often have its waters been dyed with blood; what a ghastly procession of corpses has it carried seaward on its bosom!

Now that the fight was over, Hardy experienced a feeling of revulsion, as he looked at the corpses

lying about the deck in all the abandon of violent death. The slaughter had been necessary, the defence had been gallant, but he was disgusted and sickened by the physical results of it. He was horrified to find that he was standing in blood, which he noticed fairly covered the deck and was running into the scuppers. He was glad when the crew began to seize the bodies by queues and feet and cast them overboard. There were eight of these on board, beside one that hung limply over the rail. The Russians were laughing gaily now, and they counted "Odeon, tvah, tra!" (One, two, three!) as they swung the dead bodies with a will before pitching them. They struck in the water with tremendous plashes.

And now a thing happened which made Hardy glad that he had not taken Boris Romanoff's hand. One of the Chinamen was not dead, but had been stunned by a blow on the head with a pole. He sat up and looked about him dazed, when Romanoff kicked him in the face, knocking him backward, and, snatching a gun from one of the Bouriats, pinned the man writhing to the deck. So firmly was the steel blade embedded in the planking, that the combined efforts of two men were needed to pull it out again.

The fight was over. There was no further danger of the Chinamen returning to the attack that night, if at all. They had been taught a terrible lesson, though with considerable cost, it must be confessed, to the defenders. One of the Bouriats was dead, cleft deeply at the base of the neck from a blow with a two-handed sword, while Smulders was wounded in the head by a gash that caused the blood to flow over his cheek. His clothing was copiously stained. Romanoff, it was found, too,

had sustained a thrust in the leg, of which he made light, but which was bleeding profusely. The general ordered him below.

While the men were washing down the decks, Hardy went into the passage leading into the cabins. He wished to reload his rifle, and possibly get a little sleep. He wondered how the Princess had fared during these terrible moments of uproar and carnage.

Her cabin door was open and he saw her within, comforting her maid and Smulder's Julia, both of whom were in hysterics. The two girls, clasped in each other's arms, were lying upon a berth, with a blanket drawn over their heads, sobbing and

"We have driven them off, madame," Hardy announced, "I think there is no further cause of apprehension at present." The Princess, leaning over the girls, pulled the blanket from their heads and made them understand that the enemy had fled. They sat up, dishevelled, tear-stained, white as ghosts, and, one being a Catholic and the other a Russian, began to cross themselves and mutter thanks to the Virgin. The Romanova advanced to Hardy, and offered him her hand.

"I had no fears of the result," she said simply, "with such heroes on board." Her face was pale, but it flushed and her eyes flashed as she cried, "Oh, why am I not a man, that I might have helped you!"

"You have helped a thousand times more by giving us such a cause to fight for," replied Hardy.

"You are good at making pretty speeches to women," said a sneering voice behind him. "I must tell her Highness of the effect which they produced in Japan."

#### ALL HANDS REPEL BOARDERS 141

Hardy turned and beheld Boris Romanoff

towering in the passage behind him.
"But he is wounded, my brave Boris!" cried the Princess, as Romanoff entered the room, limping painfully. As the Princess sprang anxiously to her cousin's side and assisted him to a couch, Hardy turned away and went to his cabin.

She had not been able to understand her cousin's remark, Hardy reflected, as he had made it in

English.

But the man is perfectly unprincipled," he soliloquized, "and will be sure to prejudice her against me. But what difference does it make? At Stretinsk I become a storekeeper, and she remains a princess. And no doubt she admires this Romanoff; perhaps she has enough of the savage in her own nature to admire such acts as the stabbing of that wounded Chinaman. And now she will no doubt nurse him. How did Romanoff manage to get wounded anyway, and I escape scot free? Am I to be dogged by ill luck all my life?"

### CHAPTER XXI

### STENKA PUGACHEFF'S FATE

7HEN Hardy awoke in the morning the sun was shining against his cabin window. He looked out and saw a stretch of yellow water, gleaming like gold in the bright rays of the early light, and, farther away, the dark green of the interminable Siberian forests. It was a peaceful scene, with nothing in it suggestive of the dreadful conflict of the night. The corpses of the slain were even now miles below, floating on and on by Cossack villages and stretches of Manchurian woodland, proclaiming with mute tongues that another conflict had taken place between the Slav and the Mongol, and with the usual result. Hardy went on deckhe had not disrobed on lying down—and there beheld a solemn and affecting scene. The dead Bouriat lay upon a bier improvised of two benches, with a cross upon his breast. The Princess with her maid, and his comrades, with uncovered heads, stood by, while the captain read the burial service. All were weeping\_

The simple service finished, the dead soldier, just as he was, in his high boots and faded, blood-stained uniform, and with the rude wooden cross tied to his breast, was lifted and consigned tenderly to the water, to float on and on in tireless but vain pursuit of those other corpses, some of which he himself had sent on their long, sad journey to the

sea. Hardy saluted the Princess gravely, and would have passed her by, but she detained him.

"It is a dreadful thing for a Christian's body to be disposed of in that way," said she, "but there was nothing else to do. The men wished to go ashore, bury him decently and erect a cross over him, but the general would not permit it. Doubtless there are Chinese hiding in the woods on both sides of the river, and they would have fallen upon the men and killed them. But what matters what is done with his body?" she cried, her blue eyes flashing. "He died bravely fighting for his czar, and his soul has gone to heaven. Perhaps God will heap sand upon him. They say he killed two Chinamen."

There was something in this theology suggestive of Romanoff, and Hardy asked:—

"How is your cousin? I hope he is not seriously wounded?"

"He has a nasty thrust through the fleshy part of the thigh. We have washed the wound thoroughly, and it is not dangerous. He will have to lie still, which it would be hard to make him do in case the Chinamen would attack again. He is very, very brave, is my cousin, but," she added sweetly, and with a woman's rare intuition, "that is nothing; you are all brave as lions. The captain and general both wish me to thank you for the heroic service which you rendered last night. They are fully aware of its importance."

"I am grateful for their good opinion," replied Hardy, "but I sincerely hope there will be no further occasion for fighting. Another troop of Cossack cavalry must surely pass by to-day. We saw them quite frequently as long as we had no especial use

for them."

"God will send us succour," said the Princess with conviction. "He will never permit so many of His people to be massacred by heathens. Brave Stenka will have reached the military station by noon, and sometime to-night you will hear the galloping feet of horses, flying up the road yonder. You shall see how fast he will go, and how our Cossacks will ride to the rescue! Have you seen your friend, Herr Smulders? He seems to be quite badly wounded, though he is being most assiduously nursed and appears happy. He would not let me do anything for him. I am quite jealous."

"How thoughtless of me!" exclaimed Hardy.
"I have not even been to ask after Smulders. With your Highness's permission, I will go to see him now."

Hardy found Smulders lying on a couch in the dining-room, his head bound around with a towel. The fair Julia sat by him, holding his hand and dabbing his face occasionally with a perfumed handkerchief. As Hardy entered she arose and walked away, to make place for him.

"Are you very badly wounded, my friend?" asked Hardy tenderly, sitting down at the German's head. "Is the skull fractured?"

"Nein," whispered Smulders, glancing mysteriously at Julia. "It is shust a scratch, like from one students' duel. Mein kopf is not fragtured. It iss not deep, but it iss fearful to see. So long as everyt'ng goes well, I lie here and let Chulia nurse me. But if the Shinamens comes again, I rush into the fray unt she t'inks I fight for her with one foot in the grave."

Hardy arose.

"I predict," said he, laughing, "that you will be fortunate both in love and war."

"I loaf her very heavy," sighed Smulders.

"He is not badly wounded," Hardy informed the Princess, when he next met her on the deck. "He could be up and around, I am sure, were it not that he is in love with his nurse. Under some circumstances, I should not object to being wounded myself."

He could not refrain from making this remark, and glanced at her meaningly; the old cotillon days were too near, Stretinsk and the store too far away as yet. She flushed prettily, a fleeting and involuntary confession that she understood, but, turning

away, pointed to the Siberian woods.

"Have you noticed," she asked, "that the forests are on fire?" He looked. It was true. A dense cloud of smoke was rolling up from behind a long ridge that ran parallel with the river, but no flame could be seen as yet. Half an hour later the wind shifted and blew directly from the fire, bringing the acrid smell of smoke to the nostrils of the people quarantined upon the Puschkin. The fire columns were evidently advancing up the hill, for soon trees could be seen to burst into flame here and there along its crest.

And now the Manchurians appeared again, upon their own side of the river, as before. They could be plainly seen, as the distance was in reality not great, and their dark forms stood out distinctly against the strip of white sand that stretched between the woods and the river. They were making preparations of some kind. The general brought his field glasses and studied them carefully. There was no doubt that they were digging a hole, but for what purpose it was impossible to tell. Catkoff turned to the American, who was standing by his side, and handed him the glasses, asking, "Canon? Canon?" one of the half dozen French words

that he knew. Hardy looked long and replied, as he passed back the glasses, "Nya!"

No, they were certainly not arranging to plant a cannon. There was nothing in what they were doing that suggested such a purpose. They were digging a post hole, or something like that. Their mysterious actions caused the greatest wonder among the Russians, who stood in groups about the deck, watching the shore. Several even mounted upon the wheelhouse and, shading their eyes with their hands, gazed earnestly, but without being able to suggest any solution, as their silence bore evidence. One thing alone seemed certain, namely, that those men yonder were engaged in some hostile move, were carrying out some scheme which their devilish Asiatic ingenuity had suggested, and which meant harm to the little party at bay on the Puschkin.

The Chinamen did not leave their intentions long in doubt, for they brought a huge cross out from the shadows of the forest, and a struggling prisoner, whom they cast down upon the earth and proceeded to nail to the cross. The general turned to Hardy with white, drawn face.

"Stenka," he groaned.

Yes, there was no doubt of it. The unfortunate Pugacheff had been captured and was being crucified in plain sight of his comrades. The effect upon the latter, as soon as they comprehended, was indescribable. They seized their rifles, they shook impotent fists at the shore and screamed imprecations at those fiends, engaged there in their horrid work.

One of the crew, mounting a coil of rope, addressed a few impassioned remarks to his brethren, crying, "Come on! my brothers, let us save poor Stenka, or die with him!"

Every member of the little band shouted:-

"We will save him or die with him!" And in a moment more all would have been over the rail, had not the old general drawn his revolver and leaped before them, crying in a voice of thunder,

"Stop! The first man who attempts to leave the boat I will shoot through the head!" and so great was their Russian discipline, their habitual respect for authority, that they paused and regarded

him in dumb amazement.

"What, my children," he said, "would ye fall into a Chinese trap? Those fiends there are crucifying poor Stenka that we should lose our wits and plunge into the water, when they will kill us one by one. We must be brave! It is harder to stand here and watch a comrade in torture than to die with him. Do you suppose that if there were the least chance of saving him, I would hold you back? Is there here any man who will accuse me of cowardice? No! If you go, it is I who should lead you. But I tell you that we could do nothing for poor Stenka, and that we should all be killed. Let us rather pray for Divine help and that the Virgin will relieve his sufferings. The time will surely come in God's good providence, for your revenge; and I promise that you shall feed it fat."

Even as he spoke, the cross was heaved on high, and Stenka loomed upon it, very large and plain, in the light of the sun, shining upon the white stretch of sand. The general was standing with his back against the rail, the pistol in his hand. His voice had been tender, but his eye was stern, and there was that in his manner which suggested accustomed command and the prestige of a dozen famous battles.

It was a critical moment, during which the fate of all on board was at stake.

For ten, twenty seconds, for half a minute the men stood, grasping their weapons, their muscles rigid, in various attitudes of men about to rush into the fight; and then the general conquered. Several dropped their rifles, clattering to the deck, and covered their faces with their hands, sobbing. Some fell upon their knees and prayed, while others, with pale faces and set teeth, resumed the tasks upon which they had been engaged.

The Chinamen, having finished what they had to do, retired into the cover of the woods, leaving that

awful Thing there in the light.

Hardy turned away, his teeth chattering, sick, giddy with horror. His eyes fell upon the Princess Romanova, white as a ghost, wringing her hands and staring at the awful object.

"Oh, why does not the Virgin help him? Why is not a miracle performed," she whispered hoarsely. "Listen, my friend," she cried, grasping Hardy by the arm convulsively, "could you not shoot that far? Could you not put him out of his misery?"

"This is no place for you," said Hardy; "come

away. Come inside."

"I will go pray for him," she murmured, letting the American lead her toward the cabin door. "I have a sacred ikon with me. I will promise the Virgin half my fortune if she will save him!"

Hardy returned to the deck. On the Siberian side the fire was spreading with great rapidity, and a vast patch of many acres was blazing on the slope of the hills toward the river. He tried to stand and watch, but felt his eyes irresistibly pulled toward the Thing which he knew was on the other bank. Strive as he would to look away, he felt his neck

twisting, and his head would move about so that his eyes would fall upon the crucifix and the form of the wretched Stenka. As the moments passed, the American's mental torture grew. When would another troop of Cossacks pass along the military road there? He listened and looked. It seemed to him that he could have heard the pounding of their horses' hoofs ten miles away.

Nothing! Nothing! and in the meantime Stenka was suffering that hideous agony. He would be hours, perhaps days, dying, and Hardy knew that he should not be able to endure it. He looked again, wiping from his eyes the smoke that was now becoming acrid enough to sting them. The water had fallen so that the sandbars projected in spots between the *Puschkin* and the Manchurian shore, while it rippled thinly and transparently over others. Between the outer edge of the sandbar and the bank there was a stretch of deeper water, but its width was not great.

And now an idea occurred to Hardy, the application of a desperate remedy for a desperate case. He had understood nothing of the words that had passed between the captain and the crew, though there was no possibility of mistaking their import. Why should he not again take advantage of his ignorance of Russian and act on his own initiative? While the general's back was turned Hardy walked to the prow and dropped over the side upon a bit of hard sand. Then, rifle in hand, he ran straight toward the Manchurian shore, plashing through the shallow water, that flew about him in a spray. Men shouted after him from the Puschkin. He paid no attention, but ran on, his eyes fixed upon the cross and the burden that it bore. Once he stepped into a channel where the water was up to his

armpits and running so swiftly that it nearly swept him from his feet, but he struggled and ran on

again.

A dozen or more Chinamen came out of the forest and regarded him in wonder. Then, raising rifles, they took deliberate aim and commenced to shoot, the bullets striking about him in the water. One, that hit several rods ahead of him, "skipped" like a child's pebble, and passed quite close. And still Hardy ran on, his eyes fixed upon the man on the cross. He could see the features now, but could not recognize them, they were so contorted with agony. The head was moving slowly from side to side.

#### CHAPTER XXII

#### A HARD THING TO DO

THE number of Chinamen who emerged from the forest was surprising. There must have been a hundred of them, at least twenty of whom were mounted. There could be no further doubt as to their purpose in thus torturing Stenka, openly They hoped that and in full sight of the Puschkin. his comrades, maddened by the sight, would rush to his aid immediately, or would fall into the trap later, believing that the Chinamen had gone away and left him there to suffer. So great was their astonishment when they realized that but one person was coming to Stenka's rescue, that they ceased shooting and stood staring in wonder. And still Hardy ran on, across the wide and shallow river, his eyes fixed upon that spectacle of agony. At last he stopped, for the time has come for him to do the thing which he must do. He could get no nearer without the absolute certainty of being shot down. There was no other way. It would not have been possible for Stenka's friends to reach that cross without being all picked off from the woods. He cast one glance at the shore, measuring the distance with the keen, accurate eye of the marksman. Then he removed his glasses and wiped the moisture—tears, perhaps, from his eyes. Replacing them, he aimed at Stenka, and praying:

"Receive his soul, oh God!" He fired. The

head stopped that dreadful moving from side to side, and Hardy could feel, even at that distance, that the eyes were fixed upon his own, in comprehension. He will believe to his dying day that there was gratitude in them. He had missed, however, and the Chinamen, grasping his purpose, began shooting at him in earnest, while several of the horsemen urged their steeds into the water. With the bullets scattering all about him, Hardy set his teeth and fired again.

Poor Stenka's sufferings were over. His chin fell forward upon his breast and his body collapsed limply upon the wooden peg thrust between his

thighs.

"Thank God!" cried Hardy, and turning, he ran back toward the boat, ran madly, desperately, as he had never run but once before, and that was the time when he heard the Princess scream and

saved her from the brigands.

On he ran over the hard sand covered with a sheet of rippling water, carrying his rifle low and bending at the hips. He realized that every step was carrying him farther from those savages on the shore, was putting a greater distance between himself and their rifles. He scarcely believed that he could get away without being wounded. If they would only kill him outright, or would hit him in some spot that would not prevent his running! He listened as a hare before the pursuing hunter, for the sound of the guns, and still he ran on.

But the Chinamen did not shoot again, and now from the *Puschkin* came half a dozen men to the rescue, deployed in open formation, like a troop of trained soldiers, with their eyes fixed upon something behind him. They were shouting to him, but

Hardy could not understand.

He turned, looked, and knew why the enemy had ceased shooting. They feared killing their own horsemen between him and the shore and bearing down upon him rapidly. There were at least a dozen of them, and in a minute more three, better mounted than the others, would have been upon him. These were bending close to the horses' necks, and were armed with long swords, to cut him down. The American aimed at the horses and fired rapidly, three times. One of the animals, mortally wounded, sank to his knees, while the others, stung and maddened by the bullets, became unmanageable, and ran snorting back toward the Manchurian shore.

The Cossacks now came up, and, turning in a volley upon the mounted brigands, emptied one saddle and compelled the entire party to retire, which they did slowly, shaking their swords at the Russians and yelling imprecations. They were destined, however, to lose one more of their number. The man whose horse Hardy had killed was making frantic but unsuccessful efforts to get away, his leg being pinned down beneath the dead animal. To him one of the Bouriats ran up, and wrenching the man's own sword from his hand, cleft his skull with it, and left him there with his dead steed.

When Hardy again reached the deck of the Puschkin, the general and the captain each shook his hand in silence, and the Princess, her beautiful eyes red with weeping, said to him:—

"It was an act of mercy, my friend, for which we all thank you. The soul of brave Stenka, now in

heaven, will be grateful to you."

"It was a hard thing to do," replied Hardy, faint almost to falling, "but I could not endure the

sight of the agony, I could not bear to have you look upon it. It is what I should have wanted some one to do for me," he added, as though further extenuation were necessary.

"Then," said the Princess, with a sad, solemn smile, "it was a Christlike act, a deed of sublime courage, and so I shall ever regard it. But you are faint, my friend. Go and lie down and be sure that the Virgin and all the saints approve what you have just done."

"Thanks, a thousand thanks!" murmured Hardy

"If you approve, I am sure that it was right."

And still there were no signs of help, no sounds of galloping hoofs, upon the military road yonder, that wound in and out of the dark forest, or stretched like a long white ribbon by the side of the yellow river.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE FORESTS ON FIRE

DURING all this time the forest fires were increasing in intensity and spreading with great rapidity. The trees were filled with a fog of smoke, that, drifting down over and across the river, began to obscure the prospect. The vagrant and deserted moon, a gamboge patch in an ash grey sky, looked sadly down through the acrid mist.

Vividly red and narrow lanes of flame ran zig-zag to the water's edge. Monster designs were worked out upon the hillsides in fire, notably an immense heart, and in places where the vegetation was sparse the slopes were spotted with tiny jets of flame.

From time to time mighty pines, either already dead or else dried in the intense heat, flared heavenward like great torches. The wind increased, hot as a simoon, and as the afternoon wore away sporadic burning patches began to appear on the other, or Manchurian bank of the river.

The crucifix, with the dead Cossack upon it, was blotted out in smoke, and it was a comfort to know that those grey clouds concealed in their bosom no hideous burden of suffering. There was a continuous flight of birds across the stream, whirring partridges, cuckoos, ousel, plover, and once a bear lumbered past the boat, at which it blinked with smarting eyes, curious but unafraid.

The heat upon the boat there in the middle of the

156

stream was becoming most uncomfortable, and the fear arose that it might, when the forests should be blazing on both sides of the river, grow so great as to be unendurable. A flaming ember passing high overhead revealed the manner in which the flames were being carried across to the Chinese side. A hill there caught fire in a dozen places, that appeared, on such a large canvas, like little red patches, which burned in isolation for awhile, but were soon absorbed in one continuous sheet of flame.

The sound of trees falling could be plainly heard. At noon the smoke was like a fleece and the sun was like a moon, an impossible, chrome-orange moon pasted upon a leaden, fuliginous sky.

The fires spread upon the Manchurian side with amazing rapidity—they became a general conflagration.

By mid-afternoon the heat upon the *Puschkin* was almost intolerable, and the discomfort caused to the eyes from the smarting smoke was great, yet there was no longer any fear that those on board would suffocate or perish from the intensity of the heat. Matters were now undoubtedly at their worst, and it was possible to live, to breathe. Out there in the middle of the river there was no danger of the boat itself catching fire, and the wind, which was coming straight down the stream, brought coolness and life with it from the wide Siberian plains.

And now a wonderful thing happened: a vast cloud of butterflies of endless variety floated, drifted, flitted and fluttered by in the wan haze.

Butterflies, big and little, and of all imaginable graceful shapes were there; tiny yellow butterflies and giant yellow ones, butterflies black or purple as velvet, butterflies striped like the tiger, rayed like brilliant fans, eyed like Argus, or spotted like occlots.

For an hour they drifted, floated and flitted by, as though all the endless variety of flowers in Siberia and Manchuria were perishing in the fire and their

souls were taking flight.

The sun was at last either entirely obscured, or else it looked sadly and dimly down upon the scene. a terra cotta disk, flat and thin. And while the butterflies were going by, the pattering of many feet was heard in the shallow water, and a pack of wolves, the colour of the smoke, emerged from the grey haze and trotted past the Puschkin, their backs arched, their bushy tails between their legs. Some did not even so much as glance at the boat, but others looked up with red eyes at her, but did not stop in their course. When they came to deep water they launched themselves fearlessly upon it and swam, light as corks. The human beings on the Puschkin knew when night had come by the growing vividness of the fires. Whole acres of red devastation gleamed through the haze, while the giant pine torches that flared up here and there could be seen at great distances.

As Hardy stood watching the scene that night

the Princess came up to him and said:-

"We have nothing to fear from the Chinese, I fancy. They must have all gone away. They must think that we are dead."

"It is most probable," replied Hardy, "but I fear that it will be some time before we shall be able

to take to the road."

"At the military station below," said the Princess, "there is a telegraph, connecting with the one above. It is possible for a boat of shallow draft to get down the river to a little distance from us. The general asked the men if one of their number would not volunteer to carry a dispatch to the station, but I

am ashamed to say that no one has responded. They are deterred by the dreadful fate of poor Stenka."

"I will go!" cried Hardy. "Ask the general to let me go. I can keep to the middle of the stream till I have passed the fires, either wading or swimming down the swift current. The fires cannot extend more than a mile or so down the river—a distance soon passed over—and then I will take to the highway. I am a foreigner and, if captured, will not be in so great danger as a Russian. It is not a difficult undertaking. I am sure I shall get through."

"But it is not right that you should do this for us," she objected—"you, the only foreigner on board. My cousin would go, but he cannot walk. He is raging like a sick lion because he cannot go, and even insists that he is able. I had hoped that the captain would volunteer, but he does not. He will be disgraced, and his command taken away from him. If need be, the general will attempt it, but he is old and cannot swim. He could hardly get through."

"I swim like a fish," insisted the American, "and I can get through. I know I can. There is no danger, really there isn't. The Manchurians have probably retreated inland, and, at any rate, I could slip through them in the dark. When Stenka went the river was full of them, right in his course."

His enthusiasm was boyish. The Princess smiled. "A brave man," she said, "cannot see danger,

even when it exists."

"I shall go anyway," declared Hardy. you please ask the general to prepare a dispatch for me immediately? If he does not consent I shall start down the river without it and shall try to make the garrison at the station understand,

which may be a difficult matter. I give you my word as a gentleman that I shall pursue this course—that I am inflexible in my resolve. I ask you as a favour to represent the matter to the general for me. Now is the time to go," he added eagerly, "for we shall soon be out of food, and, besides, when the fires subside the Manchurians will return."

The Princess left him without a word, but returned ten minutes later, smiling sadly and shaking her head.

"It is as I thought," she said. "The general refuses. He says that it would be an eternal disgrace to the Russian arms if a foreigner should undertake this thing. He is making one more appeal to the men. He is calling them sheep, Japanese, poltroons."

The voice of the old soldier could be heard at the other end of the boat, now sorrowful, now savage.

"He is now calling them women"; and here the Princess smiled again, and Hardy noticed that no amount of danger, privation, or suffering could take the brave light of laughter from her eyes.

"I had hoped," said Hardy sadly, "that you people would no longer regard me quite in the light of a foreigner. So far, at least as the people on the boat are concerned, I have tried to earn the right to be counted as one of you. If I have done anything to merit your own regard, personally, I ask you as an especial favour to prepare this dispatch for me and let me be off! I tell you again that I shall certainly go, with or without it. If you refuse, I shall on the instant jump into the river and start on my journey."

"I beg of you not to put it in that way," replied the Princess. "If you put it in that way, you know that I cannot refuse. I hope the occasion may arise some day that will allow me in some way to show in a befitting manner my great and lasting gratitude to you. But now you are taking an unfair advantage. You are seeking to place me

under still greater obligations to you."

"I ask for no gratitude," replied Hardy. "I am simply seeking a favour, an accommodation from you. I am begging you to write a few lines for me. Does your Highness still refuse? Well, then, good bye, and God be with you! If we do not meet again, I beg you sometimes to think of me as one who—who—good bye!"

He laid one hand on the rail, but she extended her

arm and detained him.

"Stay," she whispered, "I will write the dispatch

for you!"

She went to her cabin, and Hardy made his few hurried preparations for departure, which consisted simply in swallowing a few mouthfuls of zakouska, in filling his flask with vodka, and in slipping into his pocket a flat bottle, empty, but tightly corked. When he returned to the deck he found the Princess waiting for him, with the dispatch ready. Hardy wound it into a tight cylinder and poked it into the bottle, which he corked and put into his pocket.

"Thank you," he said simply to the Princess.

She extended her hand, and he took it, holding it, but afraid to look into her eyes. It was an honest hand that held his own in a strong, warm pressure.

"I shall pray for your safety," she murmured, "all the time till I see you or hear from you again."

He raised the hand to his lips, then climbed lightly over the rail and dropped into the river. The water reached nearly to his armpits at this place. He did not look back, but, throwing himself upon his face, swam with easy strokes, the swift current

# THE FORESTS ON FIRE

161

sweeping him rapidly downward. Soon his knees touched the soft sand, and he was able to walk for some distance. He had not gone far ere he came upon a stranded and abandoned raft, and he rolled a piece of timber from this which he guided to the deep current. He was glad to lie down again and float upon this bit of wood, letting the water cover his body, for he was coming to a narrower part of the stream and the air was very hot.

## CHAPTER XXIV

# ROMANOFF AS A WOOER

"I TELL you I can go! I can get through somehow! Men have gone greater distances worse wounded than I."

It was Romanoff who was speaking. He sat up and turned, facing the couch, as though he would rise. His wound had stiffened, and the pain consequent upon the exertion caused him to turn pale; but he did not wince. He was lying in the dining-room upon one of the upholstered cushions that extended around three sides of it.

"The current is at least six miles an hour," he insisted, "and with something light to cling to I could float the entire distance."

The heat was stifling, and the portholes were

milky with smoke.

"I shall be better off, my dear general, out in the air than in this oven, and the cool water will do my leg good. I wish," he groaned, smiling as he made another move, "that I had that Chinaman to kill over again. What a pity it is that a Chinaman has not as many lives as a cat."

The general laid a detaining hand upon his

shoulder.

"For the purpose of vengeance, nine lives might do very well," he replied good humouredly; "but in the present case I am glad they have only one, or we should be fighting yet. You really must lie down, my dear Prince. It is preposterous for you even to think of going, and if you do, it will be against my

express orders. Indeed, I hope you will not oblige me to constrain you by force."

At this moment the Princess entered.

"Don't excite yourself, Boris," she said anxiously, "or you will neutralize all the good effect of my nursing. I think it ungrateful of you not to lie still and let me show what I can do."

"Yes, and leave you here to starve or be burned up, or perhaps be carried off by the Manchurians when they return, which they are certain to do when the fires subside."

"There," said the general, "you have your commands from an authority which you ought to respect, if you do not heed mine. I will have another talk with the men. I am sure they are ashamed of themselves by this time."

"It will be unnecessary for you to trouble yourself further about the matter," said the Princess, flushing slightly and looking down, "for a—a man—some one has already gone."

Romanoff started violently and fixed his eyes upon

her.

"Who was it?" asked the general.

The Princess threw her head back and regarded him defiantly.

"The American," she replied.

"Ten thousand devils!" exclaimed Romanoff.
"The meddlesome dog!"

"But I refused to let him go," said the general.

"It is a disgrace to the Russian name."

"I take all the responsibility," said the Romanova bravely. "He asked me as a favour to write the dispatch for him, and I did so. He had placed me under certain obligations, and I felt that I could not refuse."

"And I suppose," sneered Romanoff, "that if he

were to ask you for a kiss you would think it your duty to grant even that. Your gratitude, no doubt,

will be undying."

"You forget yourself, sir!" cried Romanova, turning upon him with flashing eyes. "You presume too much upon your relationship. One more such speech and I will cancel your name from the list of my speaking acquaintance. General, I await your sentence. I beg that you will not pass over my offence lightly."

"You know that I cannot punish you, would not if I could. If one of the men had done this I should know what to do with him. But no way has ever been devised of managing an unruly woman, or

preventing her from having her way."

With which ungracious speech he turned and left the room. The Princess gazed after him sadly. This, then, was her punishment, the brave old general's displeasure; and it was hard to bear.

"I choose to forget your extraordinary remark, Boris," she said, sitting down by her cousin. "I will remember that you are wounded, and that you must be suffering, here in this hot, smoky air. I sympathize with your irritation, too, and think it noble of you. I would much rather that a Russian had gone," and she laid her hand soothingly upon his.

"Why did you not encourage my going then?" he asked, still sullen.

"I believe, with the general, that you are unable to go, that the effort would almost certainly have

resulted in your death."

"And you don't want me to die, I suppose? You would be desolated by my departure for another sphere?"

"Now, Boris, don't be sarcastic. Of course I would be desolated, as you call it, if anything

happened to you."

Elizabetha," said Romanoff eagerly, "you know why I endure it so ill when others perform services for you. You know that I would undertake any task that might win your regard—your love; that I would gladly face any danger on your behalf. And now that this—this American has saved your life, I could kill him for it!"

"You did not want my life saved, then?" she

asked sweetly.

"Oh, you are enough to try the temper of an angel! You know what I mean. I did not want him to do it. You are under no obligation to him for saving your life. You know that there is not a man in your circle of acquaintance who would not consider it the greatest luck in the world to have a chance to brave danger for you; and that this opportunity should have come to this—this——!"

Be generous, Boris, if you wish to win my interrupted the Princess, "and don't be unreasonable in your envy. You have braved danger for me, and are now wounded, fighting in my behalf, and I am nursing you. Can you not imagine that there are those who would envy your present position? You are not grateful even for the favours that you do receive. Think of your

wound, which is really quite serious."

"Well, then, you be serious for once," said Romanoff, smiling in spite of himself, "and tell me that you love me. Surely you cannot doubt my devo-

tion."

"Do you think it quite fair to bring that subject up here?" she asked, "when you know that you have me at a disadvantage?"

"But you always find some excuse for not talking to me about it. You always evade me in some way. But I am not a man to be evaded or escaped, he cried fiercely. "I love you as only a Romanoff can love. I shall not give up suing for your hand while I live; and woe to the man who crosses my path! Oh, if I could only fight for you; I would wade through seas of blood but I would have you."

Romanova shuddered, but she came nearer loving him at that instant than at any other moment of

her life.

"If you will not talk of these matters now, will you after we get to Moscow?"

"Perhaps," she replied softly; "but tell us about

Japan, unless it irritates your wound to talk."

'I tell you my wound is nothing—just a trifling inconvenience. What good it did that beast of a Chinaman to stab me before I killed him, I can't understand. It was a malignant act which he had only two seconds' enjoyment of."

"But I thought you were grateful to him for bestowing a wound upon you while fighting in my You are in a very ungracious mood to-day, defence. You are in a very ungracious mood to-day, Boris." And she laughed, a spontaneous, cheerful

laugh, the very echo of healthful humour.

"Well," he growled, indulging her whim, "if that's the way you look at it, he might have given me something worth while, something that at least would have aroused your pity for me. Now, that German over there, with his bloody pate, is a ten times more appealing spectacle than I am. By the way, I'll order him out of here. I can't talk with anybody listening to every word that I say."

"Indeed, I shall allow you to do nothing of the kind," said the Princess. "He fought bravely, and deserves every consideration at our hands.

Neither of them understands a word of Russian, and, moreover, they are so absorbed in each other that they would not listen to us if they did."

"You are a great lover of foreigners," growled Romanoff. "I wish I were a German, or an American

Jew, or anything but a Russian."

Romanova flushed with displeasure, but she re-

plied calmly:-

"I don't know whether to be amused or exasperated at you, your irritability renders you so unreasonable, Boris. But do try to control yourself. I don't want to get angry with you to-day. We have quarrelled almost continuously ever since we were children, Let's get along like cousins should for a few days. Listen!" she cried, with sprightliness. "I hereby register a vow that I will not quarrel with you until your wound heals. So it will do you no good, not the least in the world, to badger me. But beware what you say, sir! After you get on your feet again I will resume our ancient feud, and I shall treasure up against you every mean thing that you say in the meantime."

"It's all your fault if we quarrel," Romanoff replied. "If you wouldn't be so obstinate and tantalizing, if you weren't so lovely and peace-

destroying-

"But you promised to tell me about your adventures in Japan," interrupted the Princess, with decision. "It is ungracious of you to keep me in ignorance of your adventures there, which must have been most exciting, when you know that I am dying to hear all about them."

"Why, there isn't much to tell. I passed myself off as an Englishman, and sounded all classes of people. I took notice of the popular feeling, of the strength of the national defences and resources,

and made plans of the principal fortifications and sea-approaches. All the time I was thinking of you, and wearing my heart out for another sight of your——"

"Yes!" exclaimed the Princess. "This is most

"Yes!" exclaimed the Princess. "This is most absorbing—about the condition of affairs there, I mean. And what conclusion did you arrive at,

my dear cousin?"

"I became positively convinced that the Japanese mean to make war upon Russia; that no diplomatic temporizing can postpone the struggle much longer. The whole nation, to a man, to a woman, to a child, is united against us by the bonds of the most fanatic hatred. Their population comprises no classes, no disaffected races—they are a unit in this matter. The war will be one to the death, and they will fight till the last man is killed. I concluded, moreover, that they are not a foe to be despised. They are a formidable sea-power, and they can throw large and well-equipped armies into Manchuria and Corea within a very few weeks after the first blow is struck. I shall advise the Little Father to begin pouring troops into the Far East, and to strengthen the defences and garrison of Port Arthur immediately. I shall ask to be sent to the front with the first troops that go."

"Of course you will, my brave cousin!" cried the Princess admiringly. "And you will come back from the war covered with glory, and I shall be proud of you! But I can scarcely believe that Japan is so formidable an adversary as you say."

"You will see," replied Romanoff, with convic-

tion.

"Well, let her begin the war," said the Princess, rising, her eyes flashing. "There can be but one outcome of it, and that will result in the added

prestige and power of Holy Russia! But tell me

more of your personal adventures."

"Why, they are not particularly interesting. I passed off all right enough as an Englishman till this fellow Hardy came along."

"Mr. Hardy? You met him there? You did

not tell me of this-nor has he."

"No. And I surmise the fellow has good reason not to. Soon after his arrival I became convinced that the police were on my trail. So I attempted to throw suspicion on him. I conducted him to the fortifications of Yokohama, and he, in seeming innocence, took photographs of them. I also made a copy of my draft of the fortifications and slipped them into his overcoat pocket. Well, we were arrested, and, after much palaver, we were sent on our way. There was a Japanese girl on the train, by the way, to whom he made love, in the most open manner. They were as thick as two billing doves. He was infatuated with her; said that her cheeks were tinged with moonlight, that she was yellow because her mortal clay was mixed with gold dust, and that she was a queen of fairy land-

"He must be something of a poet," said the Princess, laughing nervously, "this Mr. Hardy. "Now, if you could talk to the women like that, my

dear cousin! Were you not jealous of him?"

"Jealous? Jealous of his success with a coolie girl? Not I, who know such a woman as you! Elizabetha, I——"

"But this Japanese girl! This is intensely exciting. What has she to do with the story?"

"Nothing, except that your Hardy remained there in Japan with her, and I was sent home, as I supposed, on the steamer from Hakodate. I had not been out long before I found that I had been betrayed.

and that I was to be locked up somewhere, on an island. Such were the orders; but the crew were actually planning to kill me. I escaped, killed two or three of them, put to sea in an open boat, was picked up by a Chinese sampan, and so got back to Russia."

"My brave Boris I The Virgin was with you, and,

besides, they found they had captured a lion."

"But I have not finished telling you about this American. I am convinced that he is a Japanese sympathizer, and that he suggested to the authorities there that I was not an Englishman. He is a low fellow, and I strongly suspect that he is a Jew. He was coming over here, he said, to run a store. He is a libertine, I am sure, and remained behind to conduct his intrigues with the Japanese girl, Aisome, I believe she called herself."

"But this is mere conjecture, Boris, and I must not believe these things against him, till they are proven."

"Why must you not believe them? What reason have you for regarding him with such favour?"

"Because he has shown himself, so far as I have observed, a gentleman of the most resolute courage and the most refined and delicate sentiments."

"Oh, he has! Well, when I tell you that he is a low fellow, probably an enemy of Russia, a libertine,

perhaps a Jew——"

"I cannot listen to you, Boris," said the Princess. "You really must be more generous." Her voice was low, but there was an angry light in her eyes.

"Has the fellow been making love to you, as he

did to the Japanese?" sneered Romanoff.

The Princess arose, and moved away.

"I said that I would not quarrel with you, Boris," she murmured. There were tears in her lovely blue eyes. She was sure now that she could never

love her cousin, for she knew that the imputations against Hardy, who, so far as her own observations went, approached very near to her ideal of a chival-rous gentleman, would rankle in her bosom like a poisoned arrow.

She walked over to Smulders, and was inquiring after him in German, which she understood, when she heard the loud shriek of a whistle, and the general

rushed into the room.

"We are saved!" he cried. "Two boats, with twenty soldiers on them, have come down the river. They were sent down as soon as news of the fire was telegraphed to the station above. They have a launch with them, and her Highness can be transferred without even wetting her dainty feet."

"I am forgiven, then, general?" asked the Princess. "I have been severely punished in supporting

your displeasure, even for so short a time."

"Beauty such as yours, madam, can do no wrong,'

replied the gallant general, extending his hand.

"Thank God, then, the American had nothing to do with our rescue," Romanoff growled. "Perhaps the Chinese will get him and serve him as they did Stenka."

They were taken on board the two fresh boats in the early dawn, and steamed away by the light of the sun, that stained with dragon's blood the clouds piled in masses above the blackened forests, still fiercely burning. As they made a bend in the river that shut out from sight the stranded Puschin, the ash-grey veil lifted for an moment from the Manchurian side, revealing the great cross and the form of brave Stenka Pugacheff hanging upon it. The Russians crossed themselves, and, bowing their heads, prayed silently for the repose of his soul. Then, raising their hands to heaven, they swore vengeance.

### CHAPTER XXV

"SAUVÉS, TOUS SAUVÉS!"

ARDY'S journey down the swift, vague, mysterious river that night never to be forgotten. Often, as he clung to his little raft, his knees would scrape on the soft sand, and just as frequently he would swing off into deep water and hang suspended above depths where he might easily drown, should he take a cramp or lose his nerve. Several times he grounded upon sand banks and was obliged to drag off his wooden buoy, a matter of no little difficulty, as it was partly water-logged and very heavy. Once he drifted close to shore and found himself in a counter current, that actually was taking him back toward the Puschkin, and it was only by swimming at right angles to this, and giving his raft frequent vigorous pushes, that he managed at last to get out into the downward sweep of the stream.

Fortunately, the fires had not burned close to

the water's edge at this point.

The smoke lay across the stream in a series of giant festoons. When he floated into one of these, the acrid cloud was stifling, choking, and there was naught to do but to keep his face close to the water and drift blindly.

When he came out into clearer spaces, the spectacle was weird, stygian, majestic. The forests burning on either hand—the vast, lonely forests burning, suggested a world set afire and forsaken,

while the flickering light that fell upon the river tipped the sandhills with red, and stained the rippling stretches of water with blood.

Once, while in a dark mass of smoke, he heard mournful howling, as of ill-omened hounds, and

sharp, plaintive yelpings.

Emerging, he beheld a pack of wolves, huddled upon an island of sand, unreal as ghosts. He floated quite close to them, not fearing them, and he knew

that they did not fear him.

In this monstrous world, this seemingly chimerical and fantastic world, Boston, America, the loss of his fortune, the girl that had jilted him, were all forgotten. He was a knight-errant of old time, performing a feat of valour amid such surroundings as the thaumaturgy of a Wagner or a Goethe might have conjured out of the thin air of poetic sorcery.

He was winning his spurs, rescuing from danger a beautiful Princess whom he had come to a far land

to find.

But the fires did not extend a great distance down the river, not over three miles in all, perhaps. Hardy was about three hours in accomplishing this part of his journey, for, though the current was swift, he was, as we have seen, subjected to many delays. At last he swung out into a large circular pocket, or basin, quite shallow and without motion save for a sluggish current running around its outer edge. It had evidently been in the main stream at one time, but the water, falling, had converted an opposing sandbar into a dam.

The American skirted this basin, rested on his tiny raft, without knowing that he had left the main body of the river, for the few dim stars and the rag of a moon gave little light, and the waters were now black as ink. A

# 174 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

lone pine on a bluff, kindled, no doubt, by a stray ember, burst into flames at this moment, and by this magnificent torch his situation was revealed to him. The whole shallow basin took on a deep red glow, and Hardy saw that a narrow sand pit separated him from the river proper, which was about a quarter of a mile wide at this point. He arose to his feet, dripping and chilly, for the air was cool, and looked about him. There was a good sandy beach on the other side, and the military road could be plainly seen. It was time to take to the shore, and that stretch of water must be got over somehow. It was probable that he could wade much of it, but some of it was no doubt over his head-perhaps of great depth. He would be carried swiftly down stream, but the beach extended as far as his eye could see, fading out at last in the darkness, where the light from his pine tree torch failed to Putting the bottle with the dispatch in his trousers pocket, he removed his coat, improvised a string from the lining and tied his shoes about his He remembered with a smile that it had occurred to him to take off his shoes on leaving the Puschkin, but that he had been deterred by the presence of the Princess.

Leaving his coat upon the sand, he started bravely around the basin to the point nearest the opposite shore. So eagerly were his eyes fixed upon this, in his anxiety to get his bearings while the tree was still burning, that he stumbled over some large object, about the size of a log, but too soft for one. Looking down, he was horrified to behold three bodies of dead Chinamen lying side by side, parallel, in as exact position as though arranged by human hands. They were all gazing straight up to heaven with glassy eyes, and the flare of the burning tree threw

a ghastly light upon their yellow faces. Three or four yards from them lay the body of the slain Bouriat, with his rude wooden cross, the emblem of the Prince of Peace and Holy Russia, bound to his breast. Hardy ran back, recovered the coat, and after a moment's hesitation dropped it decently over the Bouriat's face. He had lost his life in the defence of the Princess. Then, as the light of the burning tree flared defiantly starward and went out in the darkness, he waded boldly into the black waters.

As he had hoped, for much of the distance the water was shallow. At times, however, it arose to his armpits, and then the current was so strong that it swept him from his feet. He strugged resolutely onward, keeping the current at right angles to his body, and when at last he plunged into deep water, he swam, not, it is true, with the amphibious assurance and primal animal skill of a Romanoff, but with a cool, calculating ease that told him the distance could not be great, and that he must not exhaust his strength. He soon touched bottom again, after letting down his feet half a dozen times, and was gratified that the slope shoreward was so rapid that he was able, in a very few minutes, to run.

An hour after leaving the basin he was upon the military road, that stretched, dimly grey, between the solid, silent black of the Siberian forests and the star-sprinkled, whispering black of the river.

He reached the military station, a rambling building of square-hewn logs, flanked by several small structures, about ten o'clock, and, breaking his bottle, gave his dispatch to a white-haired and corpulent soldier, with a very red face, whose frayed and faded uniform proved him a petty officer of some sort. This man glanced through the paper with 176

wondering eyes, then read it aloud to a nondescript group of old women, two, or three soldiers, and a farmer or two who soon collected about him. Then he dashed into the house and set a telegraph instrument, over which he presided upon occasion,

clicking.

Hardy, chilled to the marrow, now that he had ceased walking and running, and wearied to the point of collapse, sank upon a rustic bench, believing himself forgotten in the excitement evidently occasioned by his news. In this he soon found himself mistaken, however, for a toothless old crone, with a kindly face and a red handkerchief tied over her head, came up to him, and taking him by the arm, inquired:—

"Zakouska?"

He swallowed three glasses of vodka and ravenously devoured several caviar sandwiches, after which he was supplied with warm, dry clothing and tucked away in bed.

When he awoke it was mid-afternoon, and the old commandant had delved into a Russian-French dictionary sufficiently to dig out the words, which he pronounced many times, with a smiling face, "Sauvés, monsieur, tous sauvés!" thereby affording the American the greatest joy and relief, and establishing his own reputation at the station as a wonderful scholar.

Hardy remained at the military station one week, at the end of which time he resumed his journey to Stretinsk on horseback, escorted by half a dozen Cossacks bound for Irkutsk on some military mission or other.

As he passed by daylight the blackened and devasted forests, his recent journey up the Amur and his experiences upon the Puschkin seemed like a

dream to him. When he reached the Puschkin however, still reclining upon the sand, the dream quickened into reality, and a feeling of intense home-sickness or loneliness took possession of him, as when one beholds an untenanted house, out of which a loved one has been carried, never more to return. He could see again the Princess, tall and beautiful, standing upon the deck, could feel the light pressure of her hand upon his arm, could hear in imagination the tones of her voice, earnest, even sad at times, but with the laughter lurking behind, ever ready to ripple through. Yes, that was life while it lasted, he reflected, for the Princess was there; and perhaps it would have been better for his happiness had life ended there, in that wild fight for her sweet sake.

For now came Stretinsk and the store, and he should in all probability never see her again.

But a man, if he be a man, must be brave, whatever his fate, and Hardy did not long give rein to thoughts like these. He turned his face resolutely towards Stretinsk, gaining what comfort he could from the remembrance that he had acquitted himself worthily while under her eyes. Of one thing he was quite sure: she should see that he did not wish to presume upon anything that he had done for her. If he ever met her again, it would not be through his seeking.

He learned very soon after his arrival at Stretinsk that the relief party had put in appearance but a short time after his start down the river on his perilous trip, and that the Princess had been rescued,

this time entirely without his aid.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### LETTERS FROM TWO WOMEN

THE store at Stretinsk was a low, rambling building, constructed in the shape of a capital E without the middle bar. A high board fence, connecting the extremities of the two wings, enclosed one side of a square yard which contained outbuildings and sheds for horses, a droshky or two, and several of the long, boat-shaped telegas which do duty in that country as drays. In the outhouse, moreover, was kept a supply of ploughs and other agricultural implements, whilst the store itself was stocked with an immense and motley assortment of general merchandise suited to the retail demand of the region, and for wholesale shipments to the towns along the Shilka river, upon which stream Stretinsk is located.

Hardy found the city itself dreary in the extreme, consisting merely of a collection of raw, squalid houses, located upon dusty or muddy streets. It was as new and rough as the newest frontier town in America, and hopelessly unattractive, despite the fact that it was surrounded by noble hills, and that the beautiful Shilka flowed between it and the extensive railroad shops which are maintained at this point.

During his first day in the town he put up at the Darnivostock hotel, but found the lodging so abominable, the fare so execrable, and the service so insolent, that he was glad to engage an old peasant woman of all work, and begin housekeeping in some unoccupied rooms of the Trading Company's store.

Beside this old woman, his only companion was a young Russian clerk, who spoke a little bad English, which he practised upon Hardy with such persistence that he became a nuisance, entertaining him with such remarks as:—

"Good morning, Mr. Hardy. The barn of the store is not so large as the barn of my uncle. Have you seen the barn of my uncle?" or "Good evening, Mr. Hardy. Do you think the black horse is as good as the white horse? Neither the one nor the

other is so good as the horse of my aunt."

This interesting person was possessed of the skin of a baby, pink cheeks, very thick, red lips, blue eyes and tinfoil hair. His name was Vasili Ogorodnikoff, he imagined himself a great merchant, and his manner toward Hardy oscillated between superciliousness and the other extreme of sudden servility, when reminded of his position. He was either presumptuous or grovelling. It was impossible to treat him as an equal.

And here, from the very start, Hardy got his first taste of hard work, and came to realize what a blessing it is; how it ennobles a man's surroundings, however strange, prosaic or uninviting, and what a royal panacea it is for blues, homesickness, love-sickness, or any species of festering discontent. In addition to the daily business of the store, it was necessary for him to take stock, familiarize himself with the details of the trade, get what idea he could of the accounts, study the commercial possibilities of the region. He saw immediately, if he did not wish to continue at the mercy of Vasili, that he must learn the Russian language as soon as possible; this, indeed, must be his first object. He must swallow Russian in great gulps and must digest it. He therefore looked about for a teacher, and the

only available person that he could find was a Russian Jew, who, despite his youth, wore a great bale of bushy red whiskers, falling to the fourth button of his shabby waistcoat.

Mordecai Baruch knew English very well, as he had spent several years in New York, in the factory of a relative engaged there in the manufacture of caps. He undertook to teach Hardy Russian, and he found the latter a most assiduous pupil, devoting as many as four hours a day to the subject.

Baruch was an intelligent person, of considerable learning, and he talked most interestingly concerning the condition of the Jews in Russia, their habits, folk-lore, literature, and so on. The fact that he was the only inhabitant of Stretinsk, with the exception of Hardy himself, who had ever been in America, established a bond of sympathy between the two men. The American, desirous of putting in every possible moment in the practice of Russian, frequently had the Jew present while he was eating, and often took him on the strolls in which he indulged for the sake of exercise. He tried once or twice to utilize Vasili for this purpose, but the gentleman was too intent upon learning English from Hardy.

Within a month the American was master of a great number of useful phrases, and by the first of September he had begun to read a little and to make his housekeeper understand him. Baruch, like all other Jews, possessed a genius for doing excellently anything that paid him, and he soon proved himself a most skilful teacher.

Hardy had not been long in Stretinsk before he received a letter from Mrs. Johnny Folkstone, the Boston society leader, calling him a naughty boy for running away to the ends of the earth and desert-

ing all his friends, and assuring him that society would not have been able to do without him, money

or no money, had he seen fit to remain.

"A social favourite like you," continued the fair writer, "really has no need of money, so long as some woman who is in the swim takes him up. Nobody cares where he lives, so long as he is unmarried, and he can generally manage to have invitations enough to luncheon and dinner to keep him from starving. His only necessities for which he must pay are clothes. I had no intention of dropping you, neither had Mrs. De Puyster-Biddle-Biddle. She was saying to me the other day that we had no one now who really knew how to lead cotillons since Freddy Hardy went away."

Hardy winced as he came to the old familiar "Freddy," then the thought of that stern battle on the Amur thrilled him, and he read on, the letter seeming to him now as though it were of somebody else, or as if its sentiments were echoes from a dead

past.

"Why don't you come back, Freddy? We'll receive you with open arms. You certainly must have enough left to keep up appearances with, so far as is necessary, and we'll marry you to a rich woman, Mrs. Biddle-Biddle and I will, within the year. We've one picked out for you already, the widow Featherly! What do you think of that? She has a million and a half, and though a trifle dumpy and gushy, is a good sort. Besides, she'd fall at the first shake of the tree. Some things have happened since you left, which makes me think she was in love with you. For one thing, she is entirely too spiteful about your old fiancée, who, by the way, is perfectly miserable with Mackintosh, and is flirting desperately with young Alf Eberhart—you

remember him? She is a weak little thing, Freddy, and her people drove her into breaking with you when you lost your money. A blessed good thing it was for you, too, for I don't know what you would ever have done with her without your fifty thousand a year. But come back and marry the widow Featherly: that's a good boy. You won't make a million and a half out in that country, if you stay there a lifetime, and you weren't cut out for a business man, you know you weren't, Freddy——"

business man, you know you weren't, Freddy—"
Frederick Courtland Hardy sat for some time gazing over the top of the sheet, dreaming. This mention of women brought up the image of a woman to his mind, but it was not that of the girl who had jilted him, neither was it the mental picture of the dumpy and gushy widow Featherly. It was rather that of a tall and stately lady with straw-coloured hair, laughing blue eyes and aristocratic features, and he saw her now in his mind's eye as he beheld her that time on the banks of the lordly Amur, strolling indolently along, with a Japanese parasol over her shoulder and a bunch of wild tiger lilies in her hand.

"She is infinitely above me," he mused, "according to the ideas of this country, and yet I don't believe I belong to Mrs. Johnny's set any longer. The Princess has lifted me above that. After all, I shall feel more worthy of her if I keep my own self-respect, and that I can do best by doing the work that has fallen to my lot, and by looking fate squarely in the eye."

Hardy did not get much satisfaction from Mrs. Folkstone's letter. He was pleased, of course, to learn that his old friends had not quite cast him off, but there was no strong appeal to his manhood in the career which they offered him, and the selfish-

ness and insincerity of society were too evident. He could still make himself useful to it, and so it would graciously take him back, even if he had lost his fortune!

Another letter, received not long after his arrival in Stretinsk, gave him more pleasure.

It was written upon the daintiest and lightest of Japanese paper, in very small and exquisitely formed script. As Hardy picked this letter up from his writing table, there was something about it which suggested femininity, even before he opened it.

suggested femininity, even before he opened it.

"A woman, eh?" he muttered, "and in Japan I wonder who are in Japan this summer? Perhaps the Castletons."

He held the envelope closer to his eyes to examine the script, to see if he could guess at the writer's identity, when the problem was solved. A faint and elusive perfume arose to his nostrils, so faint as to be almost imperceptible, yet imperishable as the memory of a kiss. The image of Aisome took shape again before his mind, Aisome as she had stood that night on the wharf at Hakodate, bidding him good-bye, dainty as a moon-flower, exquisite as a queen of Fairyland.

" Yоконама, August 16, 1904.

"You will perhaps be surprised at hearing from me, but you will not accuse me of forwardness, I am sure, when you learn my reason for addressing you in this manner. I confided to you, I believe, that the estimable Mr. Sano did me the honour of desiring to marry me. Soon after your departure for Hakodate he again offered me his hand, and when I made it plain to him that I should never consent, he became very angry and accused me—how shall I express myself?—of having become infatu-

# 184 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

ated with the American—meaning you. In his jealous rage he revealed the fact that he had given secret orders to the captain of the Shikoku Maru to have you disposed of.

"'You will never,' he exclaimed, gnashing his teeth like a wolf, 'behold your beloved American again.' You can imagine that this confession did not advance Mr. Sano to any great extent in my esteem. Though I did not betray myself to him, I was nearly frantic concerning you. I went to the higher authorities, told them frankly of Sano's proposal to me, and of his plot against your life. I disclaimed any interest in you, further than the fact that you were innocent, and that you were a wellknown American, and that it would not be wise at this time to excite American hostility, or to involve Japan in complications with that country. Sano, being summoned, denied any plot, denied that he had ever sought my hand, or that he had any feeling for me except admiration for my talents. The authorities were rather amused over the affair and seemed to think that I bore Sano some private grudge, which I was trying to pay off. I was reduced to despair, hardly knowing what course to puruse next, when the news arrived that the Shikoku Maru had been wrecked, and that you were taken off and carried to Vladivostok by a Russian merchant steamer. I take for granted that you are safely in Stretinsk ere this, and are deeply immersed in your new duties. Sano, by the way, is so bitter against me now, and so intent upon my ruin, that I have applied for service in Manchuria, a task for which I am fitted by my thorough knowledge of the Chinese language. So you see into what trouble you have got me by calling me your 'Queen of Fairyland' and your 'Little Lilac Blossom.' Are not women silly?

"I am firmly convinced that this susceptibility to flattery renders them unfitted for all serious work in the world.

"But I could not rest without letting you know that I did not deceive you, and that I am not the treacherous creature you must have thought me, if you gained any inkling of the designs upon you. I suppose you have entirely forgotten your Japanese friends ere this, and that you have become an enthusiastic admirer of the beauty of the Russian ladies. Still, if you should ever think of me again, I should hate to have any unpleasant impression associated with the memory of one whom you once thought of as a 'Lilac Blossom,' and a 'Queen of Fairyland.' Am I not silly?

"Your friend,
"AISOME MOSURO."

Hardy was grateful to Aisome for writing him this letter, for he saw in the impulse which dictated it only a delicate perception of the right thing, a friendly desire to save one of his own most charming impressions from wrong, and to protect her own memory, as treasured in the heart of a stranger, now in a distant land. Deciding that this was one of the most agreeable letters that he had ever received in his life, he locked it away in his desk, to treasure it as a souvenir of a very dainty lady, the thought of whom would always give him pleasure.

He gained from the letter that Aisome was a most feminine woman, despite her calling, but the idea never occurred to him that she was in love with him. He was not one of those insufferable cads who think that of every woman who looks at them twice.

# CHAPTER XXVII

### GATHERING OF THE STORM CLOUD

NE morning, as Hardy was busy at his desk in the rear of the principal room of his store, Vasili came and stood beside him, smiling supercili-

"Are there many Jews in America?" he asked. Hardy, believing that this was simply another attempt to take an English lesson on the part of his clerk, replied sharply:—

"I don't know. Don't talk to me now, please,

I'm busy."

But Vasili, contrary to his usual custom when he

was coolly received, persisted:

"The Jews are very numerous in Russia. are much hated by the Christians. They crucified our Saviour, and they sacrifice young children in their heathen rites."

This was rather an extended effort for Vasili, and, though it had a decided Ollendorfian ring, there was something in his manner which indicated a deeper purpose than the mere desire to profit by his superior's English.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Hardy, with irritation. "I have no patience with any such folly. That is all an idle superstition, unworthy to be entertained

by a man of your intelligence."
"Nonsense, is it?" sneered Vasili. " My father hates the Jews, and my uncle hates them worse than my father. Do the Americans love the Jews?"

"No, they do not love them, neither do they hate them. Some of our best citizens are Jews. There is no such thing as religious persecution in America. Any man is respected who earns his living honestly in America."

Vasili went about his work, but returned later with the remark:—

"The people of this town want the Jews to go. They do not understand why you are seen so much with the Jew Mordecai. It might be dangerous for you if there should be trouble. Some say that you are an American Jew."

Hardy dropped his pen and looked up with interest.

A slight flush, a red spot, crept into his cheek.

"You may tell my esteemed and somewhat meddlesome neighbours, for me," he drawled, "that I am neither a Jew nor a Choctaw Indian, and that when I need their advice in my private affairs I shall call them in."

"I am a Russian," said Vasili; "do you love Jews better than Russians?"

"My dear Vasili, when you persist in making a nuisance of yourself, as at present, I am quite sure that I like the Jews better than the Russians—or at least than some Russians. If you have anything to do, will you kindly go about it? I never felt better able to endure your absence than at this very instant."

Vasili moved away, smiling, but it was an evil smile.

Hardy returned to his accounts, and tried to dismiss his clerk's remarks from his mind. He succeeded for the time being, as the work before him was engrossing, but later in the day the Russian's observations persistently occurred to him, and caused him considerable annoyance. He fancied that the retail

trade had been falling off somewhat, and wondered if this were a result of the Russian lessons with the Jew. The next morning he took a long walk with Mordecai, crossing the ferry that is ingeniously run by the force of the river's current, and struck out into the hills. Hitherto he had been deeply absorbed in the Russian lessons, and there had been constantly in his mind the thought that this was her language, and that, if he should ever meet her again he would be able to talk with her in her own tongue.

Now, however, he was distracted by the scowling faces of the villagers whom he met upon the early streets. The raft-like ferry was crowded, and he noticed that the passengers drew away from himself and Mordecai, as though fearing some contagion. These people muttered in Russian, repeating the words, "The Jew! The Jew!" with a loathing and fear such as Hardy had never heard put into human speech before. As uttered by them, the word itself became an epithet of hate and superstitious horror, the most opprobrious insult that could be hurled at a fellow creature.

Hardy glanced at Mordecai. His companion stood silent, glancing down, nervously clasping one hand in the other, the collar of his long cloak turned up about his ears. Once he looked up, a fleeting glance, and there was a baleful light, half hate, half fear, in his reddish-brown eyes,

On the country road which they took after leaving the ferry they passed several telegas, or long wagons coming into town, and Hardy observed that the drivers of these also eyed him and his companion with looks of loathing, and again he heard, above the rattle of the wheels, that ancient cry of hate, "The Jew!"

They sat down beneath a tree on the side of a

hill commanding a view of the town and the winding Shilka, up whose rapid current a steamer was now shouldering its way, leaving behind a trailing plume of black smoke, of incredible size. They conversed for awhile, Mordecai skilfully leading the dialogue, without any reference to the unpleasant incidents of the morning. When, however, Hardy arose at last to return to the store, the Jew said :-

"You have made great progress, my dear pupil. You will now be able to get along by yourself, or by the help of a Russian teacher, who does not know any

English."

I do not desire to make a change," replied Hardy, "I am more than satisfied with my present teacher."

"Nevertheless," insisted Baruch, "the time has come when it will be no longer safe for you to go on with me. I have wanted to speak of this for several days, but it has been so pleasant to me to have the society of a human being here in this country of wolves and dogs, that I have not been able to bring myself to the point. Besides, I need the money that you pay me: I greatly fear that another Jewish persecution is about to break out. I have seen the storm brewing for some time. If it were not for my old mother, for whose sake I came back to this accursed country, I would quietly leave. At any rate, there is no need of your becoming involved in our troubles—perhaps losing your life. The people do not understand your associating with me. It is even whispered that you are of Jewish descent."

Hardy laughed.

"My dear fellow," he said, "it is nobody's business whom I employ for a Russian teacher. I shall pursue the course that seems best to me, and shall not allow these people to interfere with my private affairs. If necessary, we will warn the authorities."

Mordecai sprang to his feet, trembling with

passion.

"The authorities!" he cried; "do you not know that the persecutions of the Jews in Russia are connived at by the authorities, and tolerated even by the Czar himself? Could not the authorities, if they wished, uproot and dispel the superstitions that make the Jews hated and feared? The people of Russia are mere animals, ignorant and ferocious, and they do what they are told. But there will be a day of reckoning for Unholy Russia. God who opened the Red Sea for the Children of Israel, who led them through the wilderness, with a pillar of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night, who talked with Moses in the burning bush; who was with his people of old in Nineveh; the God who has made Rothschild a king of kings, who inspired the brains of Solomon and Heine, the souls of Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer, and the heart of Montefiore, He will make this rabble pay for the blood of His chosen race. All the miseries of Pale and Ghetto, all the degradation and suffering, the starvation, the blows, the massacre and pillage, are they not written down in the books of the Recording Angel? The old law of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, was written for you, oh Unholy Russia; and when your day of judgment comes your ruin will be more terrible than that of Babylon. Draw out the score, heap high the mountains of wrong, but be sure that the mills of God grind very fine, no matter how slowly they turn."

As Mordecai said these words, something of the power of an ancient seer crept into his bearing, his red eyes flashed fire, his shabby cloak seemed the robe of a prophet, and his thin, hooked nose and Semitic features took on the dignity of the ancient and glorious race whose insignia they were.

Hardy arose.

"We will walk back together, Mordecai," he said

quietly.

On his return to the store he found awaiting him a letter from Moscow. It was addressed in Russian, but the epistle itself was written in French and bore at its head a princely crest. He trembled, and his face paled as he turned back and glanced eagerly at the signature, Elizabetha Romanova.

"Mordecai," said he, "come early this evening. I am going to try to write a letter in Russian, and I shall want you to straighten it out for me!"

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### ENTER WANG

Y dear Mr. Hardy," began the letter of the Princess, "you have no doubt heard, long ere this, of our rescue from the ill-fated Puschkin. Your own adventures upon the river, and your safe arrival in Stretinsk, are all known to me, through the kindness of the police. Believe me that I was disappointed to the verge of exasperation upon learning that it was not through your efforts that we were saved. Your heroism loses nothing in my eyes from the fact, and you had already done enough to establish yourself in my estimation as a very gallant and noble gentleman. I hardly know how to thank one so modest and self-effacing as yourself for all that you have done for me. I can only repeat that I owe my life to you, and that I am deeply and eternally grateful. If you are ever in Moscow, I shall expect you to call on me at my house on the Boulevard Prechistenka-any one can tell you where it is. I hope that your affairs will bring you here before very long, that we may talk over our extraordinary experiences together. In the meantime, you must think of me as your very sincere and grateful friend,

"Elizabetha Romanova."

Hardy read this letter over half a dozen times, and the more often he read it the more satisfaction it gave him. There was a certain delicacy in the expression of her gratitude, without any hint at reward other than the offer of her friendship, which betokened an entire appreciation of his character and understanding of his motives. He spent most of the day thumbing his English-Russian dictionary and composing his reply, which, being in a language with which he was as yet a novice, was somewhat stilted. This, in effect, is what he at last worked out:—

"Most Noble Lady—I beg that you will no longer give a thought to the part which I played upon the Amur. To be of service to so charming and exalted a lady as yourself is a happiness and distinction which calls for no further reward. If I am in addition to be honoured by your friendship, my recompense is far greater than my desert.

"Very cordially yours, "Frederick Courtland Hardy."

Baruch, when he came in the evening, cast a critical eye over the letter and pronounced it excellent.

"Even as it is," he declared, "it would be possible for the lady to understand it, and she would not laugh. Nevertheless, there are two or three little alterations to be made—you would scarcely call them corrections."

When Baruch had finished, Hardy laughed good-

naturedly, declaring:—

"You are as polite as a Frenchman, Mordecai. Your 'two or three little alterations' have amounted to rewriting the whole thing. Now we will address the envelope. I think you had better do that, so as to get it exactly right. It goes to Her Highness, the Princess Elizabetha Romanova, Prechistenka Street, Moscow."

# 194 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

At the mention of this name, Baruch's face grew livid, and his eyes glowed with sudden hate.

"Romanova!" he hissed, "of the Romanoffs of Moscow? I have good cause to hate and detest that name. That accursed house was most violent in the persecutions that resulted in the expulsion of the Jews from Moscow. They used all their influence to bring this about, because they coveted certain property owned by the Hebrews, which the latter refused to sell. A whole peaceful and industrious community was uprooted in a single night, driven from their homes and their vocations; ordered to leave with their wives and families, their sick and their old, and to make shift as best they could, in the accursed Pale. My father, the trusted and honoured cashier of a bank, with a salary of \$2,500 a year, a position to which he had risen through twenty years of faithful service, was kicked out like a dog, and told to go. You cannot realize what suffering all this led to. My father, reduced to menial tasks to support his family, died of grief within six months. I have small love for the blood They are all insolent tyrants and of Romanoff. oppressors."

"My dear Mordecai," replied Hardy, "believe me, your tale of wrong fills me with pity and indignation, and I do not wonder at the strength of your feelings. I have small doubt that all you say of the Romanoffs is true, with one exception. You must except the Princess, who is a sweet and noble lady, with as tender and generous a heart as ever beat

in a woman's breast."

The Jew made no reply, but quietly directed the envelope, and shortly after took his leave.

He had not been gone more than ten minutes, before Hardy heard a tap at the door of his room,

and called, "Come in!" in Russian. Vasili entered in great excitement.

in great excitement.
"Is the Jew here?" he asked. His manner was

bold, and he did not remove his hat.

"No," replied Hardy. "Why, what's the matter

now? What do you want with him?"

"The people want him," cried Vasili, "the Christians. A Christian child has disappeared, and they think the accursed Jews have sacrificed him. This thing has gone on long enough." Vasili was speaking Russian now. "Only last year a young Christian man was found dead—murdered, and the police could not find out who did it. They laid it on the Jews. Who else could have done it? Would a Christian murder a Christian? Impossible. Such things must stop. We are going to tear down the Jewish houses and the Jewish store. If we do not find the child, we will kill every Jew in Stretinsk. We will tear their children in pieces!"

With this Vasili rushed from the room. In silent astonishment, Hardy gazed at the closed door through which his clerk had just disappeared.

"This is getting serious," he muttered at last, rising. "It may even result in serious consequences to the store."

Up to this moment he had not been able to realize that human beings, many of whom could read and write, could be capable of such fanaticism, or that credence in the mediaeval superstition of child sacrifice could still exist. The thought that he was alone here in the midst of this irresponsible population gave him uneasiness as to his own safety. He wondered how generally the report was circulated that he was himself a Jew, and the suspicion crept through his mind that perhaps Vasili was responsible for it. Could it be possible that the

#### THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA 196

Russian cherished ambitions of being made manager? Hardy looked at his pistol and determined, if it became necessary, to defend himself. But as for Baruch, would it be possible to do anything for him? There were about a dozen Jewish families in the town, he remembered, whose residences were clustered together in one quarter, while the house in which Baruch dwelt with his aged mother was at some distance from these. Perhaps it would be possible to reach Mordecai before the Christians got there, and warn him. If necessary, he would offer the Jew the shelter of the store. He seized his hat and went out into the dimly lighted street. He had gone but a short distance when a boy stopped him with detaining hand. Hardy looked down, and his eyes fell upon a Corean youth. He knew instantly that it was a Corean from the costume -baggy trousers, loose blouse and hat of bamboo frame, covered with hair cloth.

"Ten thousand pardons, Excellency," said the boy, in imperfect Russian, "I came to see if you could give me employment. I have been in town but two days, and must have work. I can run errands or carry packages. I will be very useful to you; you don't know how useful and industrious I will be! And I am intelligent, too, very, very intelligent!"

The plea was so ingenuous, the young voice so

eager, that Hardy was touched.

"I am in a great hurry now, my boy," he said. "Be here when I come back, and I will talk with you. We could use an errand boy. I was think-

ing of that very thing to-day!"
"But, Excellency," persisted the boy, "perhaps I can be of use to you now. You will see how intelligent I am!" He spoke rapidly, and his

Russian, though bristling with errors, was intel-"Hoping to get employment of you and to make myself useful, I have made inquiries. The people here hate you, and they are thirsting for the blood of the Jews. They will kill and maim; perhaps they will begin to-night, and your life will be in danger. Whatever your errand is, let me go on it. Do you believe in God? Perhaps God sent me to you!"

Hardy stood for a moment in deep thought.

"You are a very bright boy," he said at last. "I really believe you could do this thing better than I. Run, then, to the Jewish quarter and see what is going on. Then hasten to the house of Mordecai Baruch. Do you know where it is?"

"Yes, Excellency. You passed there this morn-

ing with him, and he went in."
"Well! You have been shadowing me. Tell Mordecai to bring his mother to my store, if they are in real danger, and I will try to protect them. The Russians will hardly dare to attack American property. Then run back to me as fast as you can."

"Yes, Excellency."

The boy was gone, and Hardy, after watching his slender form as it flew down the street until it disappeared around the corner, turned and went back into the store. Removing his coat and hat, he sat down at his table, and awaited the boy's return. The more he thought of this occurrence the stranger it seemed to him. Seldom had he acted so purely on impulse as in the present instance. But the boy had come up to him so suddenly, he was so quick-witted and his proposition so sensible, that there was no resisting him. Hardy had heard that the Coreans were a bright race, naturally, but never before had he received personal evidence

of the fact. He now concluded that they compared favourably in this respect with the precocious

Japanese.

In less than half an hour the boy was back. The housekeeper brought him to the door of Hardy's living-room, and admitted him. He had the girlish cast of features which had made it so difficult for Hardy to distinguish between the Corean boys and girls in Vladivostok. His hair was drawn up into a tight knot on top of his head, and his face, save for a livid scar across his right cheek and temple, was positively beautiful

"Well?" said Hardy.

"The worst is happening," said the boy quietly. "The wolves are howling, and have already smelled blood. They are maddened by the scent of it. They are demolishing the Jewish houses, are stealing their valuables, and burning their furniture. A number of the Jews are barricaded in the Jewish store, and a great crowd is collected in front, howling for blood. Mordecai and his mother have disappeared."

"My God!" exclaimed Hardy. "I must go

immediately to the police."

"It will do no good," said the boy, "the chief of the police has left town, and the police themselves are assisting in the work of destruction. Your own life, unless you use great discretion, will be in danger. It is rumoured that you are a friend and associate of Jews, perhaps a Jew yourself. I tore this from a wall."

He laid upon the table a poster, bearing a crude woodcut of the Saviour's head, wearing the crown of thorns. Beneath were the words:-

"Death to those who murdered our Lord!" Hardy rose and paced the floor, his hands in his pockets. From time to time he stopped and listened, but all was silence without.

"Had you not better fly while you can?"

It was the voice of the boy, whose presence he

had for the moment forgotten.

"Fly! No! I came here to stay, and whoever attempts to interfere with me will find that he has caught a Tartar and no Jew. What is your name, boy?"
"Wang, Excellency."

"Wang what?"
"Just Wang."

"Well, Wang, you are a good boy, and I will find you a place to sleep. I can make use of you. Hello, what's that? Do you not hear something?" They both listened.

"Yes, sir, I hear the feet of a man running, as if for his life, and hoarse shouts in the distance."

## CHAPTER XXIX

. .

### THE STORM BREAKS

TARDY ran through the large principal room of the store, lighted by a single kerosene lamp with reflector, to the street door. This he opened and began to shove up the iron shutter. He had not raised it more than two feet when Mordecai glided through beneath it and slammed it down again. He was chattering with fright. Even by that dim light Hardy could see that the Jew's face was the colour of veal and that his eyes were dilated with horror.

"Save me! Save me!" he pleaded hoarsely, as he fumbled at the big key with trembling fingers,

vainly trying to lock the door.
"Hark!" he whispered, "the Christians are after me. Do you not hear them howling like wolves? They will tear me to pieces!"

And, indeed, at that moment the sound of savage voices could be heard, louder and louder as they came near, shrieking, barking, howling:-

"Moschke! Moschke! The Jew! The Jew!" Mordecai sank to the floor and threw his arms about Hardy's knees.

"Save me, save me, and I will be your slave!"

Hardy seized the man by the shouders, shook him roughly and pulled him to his feet.

Get up, man," he said quietly, "and pull yourself together. I will do all I can for you. Wang, take him away from the door; take him back into

the store. They may hear him here."
"Yes!" chattered Mordecai, hide. Hide me, boy, hide me. I have money, I will make you rich!"

The shouting without had suddenly ceased. Absolute silence, more portentous and terrible than noise, prevailed. Hardy stood listening, with but a wall and a door between himself and the Middle

Ages.

He must outwit this mob, somehow; he did not see exactly how. He hardly believed that it would demolish the store as it had done the property of the Jews. There must be some one among those maddened fanatics to tell them that this was American property, to suggest possible retribution in case they made a mistake. Hardy was glad now that he had made such progress in Russian. At least he should be able to understand better what was going on, and to make himself understood.

And still that mysterious, portentous silence without. Could it be possible that Vasili was admitting the Russians through the back door? Could the man be so blind to his own interests as that,? Were they quietly setting fire to the building?

There was a sudden crash, a loud hammering upon the iron shutter without. Evidently the Russians had been whispering together, and this sign of momentary hesitation gave Hardy reassurance.
"What do you want?" he shouted through the

"The Jew! The Jew!" came back the response, in a roar

"Wait a moment," he called back. "I will come out and talk with you!"

## 202 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

Even yet he had no clear plan in mind, save the general idea that he must parley with these people. It was all-important to gain time, that their passions might subside. Perhaps, if he could get them to arguing, their fury would wear itself out in words. Possibly he might say something that would deter them from further outrages.

There was a garret, reached by a ladder. A window faced the street, and from this he determined to speak with the mob. He ran toward the ladder, but was stopped by Wang, who glided up to him.

"I have an idea," said the boy. "Are there no

priests' costumes in the store?"

Hardy gazed at him for a moment, and then suddenly comprehension seized him.

"Good!" he cried, "good!"

Springing to a counter he jerked down a long priest's robe and tall hat. Mordecai was crouching between bales of cloth. From these Hardy dragged him forth.

"Here man," he commanded, "put these on and go out by the back door and walk hurriedly away. Walk all night, then throw them away. You will be safe as soon as you are out of Stretinsk. Come, come, man, hold out your arms. There! It's your only chance. Here, put on the hat and let me hang this cross about your neck. When you hear me talking to the mob, let him out of the back door, Wang. Go with the boy, I tell you, man. The mob will be in here soon. Good-bye! And good luck!"

He seized the terrified man's hand, that was cold and limp as the hand of a dead man, and then scrambled up the ladder. The uproar without had commenced again, and the pounding upon the door was being renewed.

He threw open the window shutter and looked

out. There were at least five hundred people in the crowd, many of whom were carrying flaming torches, which they held high above their heads. All ages were represented, from babes in the arms of mothers, to old men and bewhiskered countrymen in blouse and high boots. Hardy noticed several policemen in the throng, as well as two or three priests.

"There he is!" shouted some one, and the cry

went up:-

"The Jew! The Jew! Throw him out to us. Let us in to him!"

"What do you want of him?" asked Hardy.

"We want to play with him!" came the reply,

followed by horrid, cruel laughter.

"Friends," said Hardy, "you must be careful what you do here. This is not Jewish property. It belongs to an American, a Christian; Frederick Emery, a good man, whom we all know."

Hardy did not realize till that moment how much Russian he knew. He felt that he could have talked

Chinese, had it been necessary.

"We do not want to destroy the property. We want the Jew, Mordecai. Pitch him out to us."

"No," said a tall Russian, who seemed to be ringleader. "We do not want to destroy the property, but we will burn it to the ground if you do not give up the Jew. The Jews must die. They crucified our Saviour; they sacrifice Christian children."

"But I assure you, good friends," argued Hardy, "that Mordecai had nothing to do with crucifying the Saviour. That happened two thousand years

ago."

"He is making sport of us!" howled the mob.

"He is a Jew himself!"

"Tell us," sneered the tall man, "are you a Jew?"

## 204 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

"I am not a Jew," replied Hardy firmly. "I am a Christian. There is not a drop of Hebrew

blood in my veins."

"Then prove it to us. It has been said that you are a Jew. If you are a Christian you will throw out the Jew, that we may tear him in pieces, that we may beat him to death. Act quickly, for we must have the Jew!"

And again that awful cry went up:—

"The Moschke! The Moschke! The Jew! The Jew!"

Hardy felt a light touch upon his arm, and Wang whispered to him:—

"He is gone, he has got away!"

"Friends," said Hardy, in a calm, clear voice, "I cannot meet your test. There is no Jew here. I give you my word that Mordecai is not here."

Vasili now stood out from the others.

"Mr. Hardy," he said, "we saw him run in this direction. We are sure that he was coming here. Where else would he seek protection, save in the house of his companion and friend?" This sneeringly.

"You had better help me in this trying situation, if you know on which side your bread is buttered. This is your opportunity to win Mr. Emery's favour."

"I do not doubt your word, sir, but these people will be hard to convince."

"I saw the Jew go into the store!" shrieked the boy. "He crawled under the iron door."

"He is lying to us," howled the mob. "Beat in the door. Death to the Jew! to the Jew!"

Pandemonium now broke loose again. Heavy rocks were hurled against the doors and windows,

and three or four stout Russians brought up a log, to batter in the iron shutter.

"Oh, my dear master," pleaded the Corean boy, "fly while there is time! They will kill you, they will tear you in pieces! They are madmen!"

"I shall not fly," said Hardy. "They may kill me if they wish, but I will teach them a lesson first."

At this moment a droshky drove up through the throng, the driver furiously lashing his horses, and stopped before the door.

A corpulent man sat in it, with white side whiskers. He wore an American fall overcoat, of the latest

cut, and a Derby hat.

"What's the matter here, friends?" he asked, standing up in the carriage. He spoke perfect, fluent Russian. There was no fear in his face, his voice, or his attitude. A sudden hush fell upon the throng.

"If you please, Mr. Emery," said the tall Russian, who had acted as ringleader, "we want the Jew who is being sheltered in the store. Another Christian child has been sacrificed, and we are punishing the Jews. We want Mordecai, and if this man

in the window is a Jew, we want him too,"

"He a Jew?" laughed Emery. "He is as good a Christian as any man amongst you. Do you think that I would have sent a Jew here to take charge of my store? Do you not know me better than that?"

"We thought so because he associated with a Jew constantly, in preference to Christians," said the ringleader.

"How is that, Mr. Hardy?" asked Emery; what explanation have you to make to these good

people?"

# 206 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

"I hired the Jew to teach me Russian," said Hardy. "He was the only man in town who

spoke English sufficiently well."

"Ah, do you see? Do you see?" cried old Emery unctuously, waving a conciliatory arm in the air. "He made use of the Jew that he might learn the beautiful language of Holy Russia and thus become able to converse with you, his friends and neighbours—my friends and neighbours. I see it all!" Here Mr. Emery opened both palms and extended them over the crowd. "He no doubt kept the Jew constantly with him, that he might learn the language as soon as possible, and thus get rid of him at the earliest moment compatible with his laudable purpose. You see what astounding progress he has made. I could hardly believe my ears when I heard my friend speaking Russian so well. Mr. Hardy, is there a Jew concealed in the store?"

"Nyet," replied Hardy. (Russian for "No.")

"He says 'No,' and that convinces me. Nevertheless, you shall come in and see for yourselves, and if you find a Jew here, I will agree to eat him, without pepper or salt. Mr. Hardy, come down and open the door."

Hardy complied with the request, and Emery, jumping briskly from the carriage, entered, calling

out cheerfully:-

"Vladimar, Anatoli, Sergei, come in and look about, and then you shall take out a barrel of vodka, and all the friends shall drink to my safe return to Holy Russia."

The three men entered, shamefacedly, protesting that they would take Mr. Emery's word as to the Jew, but he slapped them one by one heartily upon the back, shouting:—

"Come in, brothers, come in!"

Twenty minutes later they went out with a barrel of vodka, announcing:—

"Christians, there is no Jew here. Let us drink

to the health of Frederick Emery!"

The mob dispersed.

"Well!" exclaimed old Emery, as he slammed down the iron shutter, "what in the devil does all this mean?"

- "It means," explained Hardy, "that there has been a massacre of Jews, and that Mordecai, whom I employed to teach me Russian, fled here for shelter. Wang here, my Corean errand boy, and myself disguised him as a priest and sent him about his business."
- "Good!" exclaimed Emery, "Good! Blamed clever!" He sprang to his feet and paced the store. He was an excitable man. "But I got here just in time. I came up on the *Ingoda*. Those blood-thirsty devils might have set fire to the store, and perhaps have killed you. I think I'll stay here for a month or so, and help you out. My boy, I have great news! Good news! Glorious news!" Here he jumped upon the counter, and, sitting there, looked triumphantly at Hardy, pulling fiercely meanwhile at both of his side whiskers.

"What is it?" asked Hardy.

"War, my boy, war, between Russia and Japan!"

"And do you call that good news?"

"Yes, for merchants, for commerce. I fear you haven't acquired the commercial spirit yet, my boy. Big contracts, tremendous sales, high prices! An unparalleled demand for everything on earth Business! Business! Business, till you can't rest. That's what war means! We'll have tremendous

208

shipments of goods sent over to Vladivostok, and every steamer that comes up the river bringing them to our stores. It'll be a big war—a great big war, for little Japan is going to give Russia the fight for her life!"

"Do you think so?" asked Hardy wonderingly.

"Do you think Japan will be able to stand up

against Russia?"

"Stand up against her?" shouted Emery. "Why, she'll make her tremble to the very foundations. Our friends out there will have something besides Jew baiting to attend to when that war breaks out. I've been in Japan, looking the ground over, and I know what I'm talking about. Did you ever see a mother cat pounce upon a big, clumsy dog? Well, Japan is a whole nation of wildcats, thirty million wildcats, and Russia is the clumsiest kind of a clumsy dog."

"By the way," said Hardy, "I wonder what became of Mordecai's mother? I forgot all about

her in the excitement."

"The Christians killed her," said Wang, who was standing in the shadow.

"Hello!" exclaimed Emery, "that boy of yours speaks Russian. And blamed well, too!"

# CHAPTER XXX

### OFF FOR MOSCOW

MERY stayed on in Stretinsk, lengthening his visit into months, and Hardy became greatly attached to him, finding in the companionship of this cheerful, bold, resourceful, self-made man an inspiration which the fellowship of his former society friends had never afforded him. The old merchant received frequent advices from his agent in Japan which confirmed him in the belief that war was imminent, and Stretinsk, at the head of river navigation in Siberia, seemed to him the most important of the company's posts in Russia.

"They'll be rushing great armies to the front as soon as the war breaks out, my boy," he said frequently; "it will tax all the resources of the empire to defend Port Arthur, Manchuria, even Vladivostok, and even after the railroad is completed they will

send supplies down the river."

"But the river freezes in winter," objected Hardy.

Emery laughed.

"It will take this country more than one summer to whip Japan, and then the Japanese won't know

they're licked."

Under Emery's direction, Hardy obtained a conception of the possibilities of commerce on a grand scale, and much of the older man's enthusiasm entered into his blood. Emery, on the other hand, frequently declared that his young associate had the making of a great merchant in him, and came more

and more to entrust him with important matters,

and to rely upon his judgment.

Vasili, who was suspected of having been active in exciting popular hatred against Hardy, whom he regarded as having supplanted him, was transferred to Vlagovestchensk.

And during all this time the Corean boy, whose intelligence and adaptability were truly marvellous, steadily grew in favour with his employers. His progress in Russian was extraordinary; and as it transpired that he also knew Japanese and some Chinese, he was, after a couple of months, promoted from errand boy to the office, and set to writing letters.

In the meanwhile Hardy received another letter from the Princess Romanova, a chatty, delightful letter in Russian this time, complimenting him upon his progress in the language, and telling him much of her own life and of affairs in Moscow. Among other things, she mentioned the fact that she had spoken of his heroism upon the Amur to the Emperor, and of the debt of gratitude which she owed him. She assured him that she would be glad to hear from him from time to time, and signed herself "Your friend, Elizabetha Romanova."

The cold Siberian winter came on, but Hardy, who had dreaded it, found it enjoyable. The huge stoves, each of which was built through the wall and heated two rooms, kept the store warm, and the great fur overcoat with which he provided himself proved ample protection against the zero weather out of doors.

The country was indescribably beautiful too during this season, when the bright sun glittered upon the stretches of snow, and the droshkys dashed madly through the streets, shaking music from their jingling bells; or at night, when the enormous moon, scarcely less brilliant, shone over the white hilltops and the winding Shilka, now an icy highway for skaters and sledges.

In January Emery announced to Hardy one day that he wished the young man to take a trip to Moscow, and perhaps St. Petersburg, on business.

"You know the language so well now, my boy, that you will be able to attend to this business as well as I. You aren't fluent in it, it is true, but you are particularly strong on commercial Russian. Let's see, when did you begin?"

"About the first of July, immediately after my arrival."

"Well, you have simply absorbed it through every pore of your body. Your enterprise in this particular was most commendable—just the thing that old Tom Hardy, your father, would have done. I knew that I shouldn't make any mistake in you, if you had any of Tom Hardy's stuff in you. Blood Now I tells. That's a fact that you can't get around. shall want you to spend the next few days going over the things that we must round up. Go straight to Seltzer & Galanter in Moscow. I'll give you a letter to them. They'll be most useful to us in cornering the blanket market. We must corner the whole business!" shouted Emery, seizing his left muttonchop in one fist, while he brought the other down with tremendous emphasis on the table. saddles; we must get the contract for supplying the army with American saddles. That will come later, because this fool government does not believe that Japan is going to fight. But we must lay pipes for contracts. It's easily done. Whoever can promise the government contractors, the biggest rake-off, gets the order. This country is rotten to the core.

Corruption and peculation prevail everywhere. That simplifies business, and makes it easy. You don't have to worry about the quality of the goods the one essential is to attend to the purchasing official's rake-off. Now in Japan it's different. The system there is to get the best goods for the money, and even then they won't pay you if there's any way to get out of the bill. We are already selling supplies to the Japanese government—wheat and horses. Isn't commerce a glorious thing, my boy? It wastes no nerves nor time on silly sympathies, but fits out both sides with the munitions of war; and the better it keeps them supplied, the longer they can keep fighting, and the more supplies they need!"

Hardy smiled. The older man's enthusiasm, though infectious, had its element of grim humour.

"By the way," said Hardy, stammering slightly, and feeling a trifle confused; "there is a-ahmatter of which I wish to speak to you. You know this country so much better than I, and its customs. I have received an invitation from the Princess Romanova to call upon her while in Moscow."

It was a little difficult to speak to Emery on this subject, he was so practical, and his grey eyes were so shrewd, and at times twinkled so humorously. Yet he was thoroughly kind-hearted; he loved Hardy, both for his own and his father's sake, and he took a paternal interest in the young man.

"Is she the one whom you saved from Chinese

brigands?"

"She is the—ah—the one whom I came up the

Amur with," replied Hardy modestly.
"Well, go and call on her!" decided Emery,

without a moment's thought.

"Yes, but I feel some little hesitation. She is a

Princess, and I am now a merchant, and we are in Russia. I don't want her to feel under the least obligation to me for what I have done. That is to say, I do not want her to feel that I am taking advantage of it. She means all right; but taking me up might cause her some little inconvenience or embarrassment. Her relatives are proud and haughty, and I don't belong to her social set."

"Social set be blanked!" roared Emery. "Haven't you got that Boston tommy-rot out of your head yet? You're an American gentleman, and an American gentleman is good company for any Princess that walks the surface of the globe. Besides, if you stay with me, and this war goes right, I'll make a merchant prince of you, my boy;

and those are the only princes these days."

"I gather, then, that you advise me to call on

her?" said Hardy.

"That's what I do! She'll not be coming down any to receive the son of old Tom Hardy. Besides, she asked you to come and see her, didn't she?"

"Certainly, but---"

"There are no 'buts' about it. A woman's a woman, and a man's a man, and the artificial distinctions of so-called civilization are not even skin deep. It would be a great thing for the firm if one of its members were to marry a princess," added the old man reflectively.

"Oh," cried Hardy, suddenly flushing; "there's no possibility of anything of that sort. I hope I am not cad enough to give you the idea that I think the Princess is in the least interested in me in that way. I assure you that I know positively that she isn't."

One week later, in the middle of January, Frederick Courtland Hardy crossed Lake Baikal to Irkutsk.

# 214 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

and there took the magnificent "train luxus," a nine-days' railway journey, to Moscow. Though he was going on important business, yet he felt strangely agitated over the fact that he was soon to see the Princess again. With the agitation, too, was mingled a certain degree of misgiving and foreboding. He was not sure that seeing her would conduce to his peace of mind.

He was accompanied by his Secretary, Wang, the Corean boy, who had rendered himself indispensable through his genius for details.

### CHAPTER XXXI

#### THE PRINCESS AGAIN

HARDY never forgot that journey to Moscow. For days the heavy train rolled slowly along through a vast park, covered with illimitable stretches of snow, or through leafless, naked forests, shivering in the cold blasts of winter. All the trains that passed were crowded with emigrants, bound for the Amur region, while the car windows were thronged with the fresh, innocent faces of children. To many of the trains prison cars were attached, bearing their sorrowful freight to the dread island of Saghalien, which now takes the place of Siberia as a land for deportation. From the windows of these cars also many children looked out, pressing their little faces against the bars, for the condemned are allowed to take their families with them. Hardy had long since realized that he was in Russia -the Russia of the story books and the magazine articles.

That he was in "Holy Russia," too, he was not allowed to forget, for there were shrines and ikons of Christ, the Virgin, and of different saints in all the railroad stations; and before these his fellow passengers often crossed themselves, or purchased and lighted some of the candles to be had for a copek or two apiece.

Occasionally, too, a travelling church, built upon the bed of a railway car, would pass, trailing at

the end of a train. These were gorgeous, with much fret work, tinsel and gold, and through the open doors could be seen showy glass pendants of hanging chandeliers, the yellow blinking of lighted candles and the gleaming of polished ikon frames. These travelling churches, Hardy learned, were commercial ventures, conducted by the priests in charge, who took religion about the country very much as a patent medicine-man takes the wares he sells from his painted wagon. On and on the train rolled steadily, night and day, through the land of the Czar, the great wood-burning engine breathing steadily, rather than puffing. They crossed the broad Yenesei, with its fine iron bridge, at night, while the electric lights of Krasnoiarsk glittered in the distance like a cluster of stars; over rolling stretches, snow white, they undulated, to the river Tom, which they passed at ten in the morning; then on through the country of the Khirghis, the land growing more and more hilly, to the arrowy Om and the woodbuilt city of Omsk.

They were nearing the frontier now, and Siberia, with its broad, well-fenced fields, reminded Hardy of the Western States of the Union.

Up and up they climbed steadily into the picturesque Urals, until at last they passed a stone monument on the left of the track, and Hardy had now left Asia behind and was in Europe. As they stopped at the various brownish-yellow stations, he saw frequent gangs of buxom, pretty girls marching down the track with long rakes or brooms resting on their shoulders, or engaged in cleaning the rails of snow and other litter. These girls wore red waists, and over their heads handkerchiefs of bright colour, making a vivid picture against the white background of the snow.

Villages became frequent. First the gleaming dome of the church would be seen a long distance off, and then the cluster of squalid straw-thatched huts about it, and perhaps a row of picturesque windmills, for grinding grain.

Then came the stately Volga, with its mile-long bridge, pouring the Ural snows into the Caspian's

mighty urn.

They came in sight of Moscow one evening at a little before sunset; an indistinct blur of houses, out of which loomed large and clear the towers and domes of numerous churches, many of them overlaid with gold leaf, and glittering gorgeously.

At eight the train drew up in the modern and commodious station of Moscow, and the American, as he looked about him, felt that he was in the heart of European civilization once more.

Wang, who was invaluable, through his ready wit and his knowledge of Russian, attended the baggage and engaged a sledge to take his employer to the Gosteenneetsa Russia, or hotel, the best caravansary in the city, and a very sumptuous and comfortable inn, as it proved.

The mad life and gaiety of the town, the evidence of wealth and pleasure, the lights sparkling upon the snow, the laughter of the magnificently dressed women, dashing here and there in the innumerable sledges, the crashing and jingling of bells—all these things thrilled Hardy, and made his heart beat faster as he drove to the hotel.

She, the Princess, was one of the richest of the rich, one of the most aristocratic of all the aristocrats of this brave town, he reflected; and he looked eagerly into all the sledges as they passed by in endless stream, if perchance he might see the haughty, laughing, high-bred face he knew so well, if perhaps

he might pass her here, as he had done in the streets of Vladivostok.

All the fashion and wealth of Moscow seemed to

be out this crystal-clear, biting evening.

He wondered, should he see her, would she recognize him? Would that superb, fearless, handsome and unprincipled animal, Boris Romanoff, be by her side, chatting gaily and intimately?"

The three first adjectives passed through Hardy's mind in justice to the man, but he could not resist adding the last in justice to himself, and he felt a sharp twinge of pain grip his heart—the fingers of jealousy—though he would not have liked to acknow-

ledge the sensation by that name.

The knowledge that Romanoff had been with her all this time, passing his evenings with her, taking her to the theatre or for drives, or meeting her at social gatherings, gave him acute discomfort, and he realized sharply, as he drove along in his hired sledge, that he was in Russia and engaged in commerce. He decided, before reaching the hotel, that perhaps he would not call after all; that it would be foolish for him to do so.

"If I should become infatuated with her," he muttered, "I should only make myself the more

miserable by seeing her again."

For several days he devoted his entire attention to business, conferring with merchants and going over lists, prices and accounts with Wang. Meanwhile, whenever he went into the streets the interminable procession of sledges was there, and he watched them constantly, always with one face in his mind; that graceful head held so high, with its crown of hair the colour of ripe wheat and fine as spider threads. Many ladies of pure Russian type he saw, their faces peeping saucily from collar

and hoods of costly fur, and often he would start and his heart would throb more violently as he thought he recognized the Princess. He would generally realize his mistake, however, before the sledge would dash by with its jangling bells.

But on one or two occasions he was not quite sure, and he would glance back at the sledge, flying down the street in a flurry of snow-spray, wondering if indeed he had again looked into the eyes of his fair fellow-passenger of the *Puschkin*.

He was more easily deceived for the reason that there was a striking general resemblance among the faces, owing to the prevalence of the Moscow type, insisted on by the poet Gryboyedoff, in his charming comedies.

He would have gone away without calling on her, had he finished his business as quickly as the original plan contemplated, but old Emery, who had come on up as far as Irkutsk, kept writing him, sending new commissions. Emery, by the way, was becoming jubilant. The diplomatic relations between Russia and Japan were growing less cordial every day; the demands of the latter country were waxing more and more insistent and difficult to evade. The Japanese, too, according to Emery's advices, were rushing preparations for a death grapple with the Bear on a gigantic scale.

"This means war, my boy," wrote the old man. "And war means business!"

So Hardy worked away, enlarging his acquaintance with the Moscow merchants; the while his respect steadily grew for the magnitude of their operations and for the greatness of the city's industries.

And one evening, as he walked home to his hotel, he saw the Princess Romanova. There was no

mistake about it this time, and he realized that, when it was indeed she, there could be no mistake. She was leaning back in a sledge, with high curving dash, luxuriously piled with skins. On an elevated seat in front sat her coachman and footman, the former directing the energies of four milk-white steeds, whose tails were tied in knots, but whose long manes streamed wildly in the wind. Two of these horses were running free, and thus untrammelled—the beauty and grace of their movements was a sight to be remembered for a lifetime. The Princess wore a white round cap of fur, and her cheeks, deliciously reddened by the excitement and the keen teeth of the wind, were snuggled in the soft collar of a white fur cloak. Hardy noticed, with a thrill of distinct pleasure, that no man, but an older woman, accompanied her.

And the Princess saw Hardy.

As he arrested his steps at the edge of the curb and gravely lifted his hat, she bowed and, leaning forward, touched the coachman and called to him. He brought the horses to a sudden stop, rearing upon their haunches and slipping in a wild jumble.

Presently they stopped, and stood trembling.

The sledge drew up to the curb.

"Why, Mr. Hardy!" exclaimed the Princess, in Russian. "I had no idea that you were in Moscow. How long have you been here?"

"A little over two weeks."

"Over two weeks, and have not been to call on me! I do not consider that kind. Madame Prebiloff, this is Mr. Hardy, the American whom I told you about, who rescued me from the Chinese brigands, and performed such feats of valour on the Shilka. I do not see why he ever rescued me at all, if he does not think me worth calling on." "The Princess has talked constantly of you," said Madame Prebiloff. "Half the young men in Moscow are waiting to challenge you. Hearing of your wonderful skill, they have all taken to practising with the pistol. The proprietors of the galleries are getting rich, and one can scarcely sleep at night on account of the constant popping."

The Princess laughed merrily.

"You are positively incorrigible, Anna," she said. "But," turning to Hardy, "tell me why have you not been to see me? What excuse have you to offer, sir?"

"I should have called before I left, to pay my respects," said Hardy bravely. "I have been very busy. I am here on business, you know, for the American Trading Company, buying up stock for their posts on the Amur. I—ah, had not expected to devote much attention to society."

"Mr. Hardy is a merchant then?" inquired Madame Prebiloff languidly. "How interesting!"

The Princess's eyes flashed dangerously, but she

made no reply to Madame Prebiloff.

"But even if you are busy," she said, "you can spare a little time for your friends. Will you not call upon me to-morrow evening? I shall be quite alone, and we can talk over our wonderful adventures together. Come at eight."

The horses, stung by the cold, were becoming unmanageable now, and were plunging and rearing.

" I shall be most happy," said Hardy.

"Au revoir, then," said the Princess. "I shall

expect you.

She spoke to the isvoschik, and the sledge, with a sudden crash and a rythmical jangle of bells, flew down the street. The American, with head uncovered, stood looking after it.

### CHAPTER XXXII

### WANG IS JEALOUS

"HOW do I look, Wang?" Hardy asked of his Corean boy, who was sitting in the room of their suite at the hotel which did duty as an office. Wang glanced up from the pile of correspondence with which he was busy.

"You look like a gentleman," he replied quietly.

"Thanks," said Hardy, who was in evening dress. "I am glad you think so, for the costume which I am now wearing was invented to convey the impression that a man is either a gentleman or a waiter, though it has, first and last, it must be confessed, covered the back of an occasional coward or clown. It is necessary for me to-night to look the gentleman, my boy," he added, whimsically, "for I am going to mingle with the haute noblesse. The merchant of Stretinsk, Wang, is on his way to the palace of the Romanoffs!"

Wang smiled.

"Once a gentleman, always a gentleman," he replied. "There are many among the drunken, licentious and cowardly nobility of Russia who are less worthy to enter palaces than the merchant of Stretinsk!"

Hardy laid his hand on the other's shoulder.

"You look pale, my boy," he said kindly. "You are working too hard. Put these away now and go

to bed—or, here, take this and go to the theatre," and he laid a gold piece upon the table. Wang flushed and handed the money back.

"If I go to the theatre," he said with consider-

able spirit, " I can buy my own tickets."

Hardy's finer feelings prevented him from

smiling.

"Pardon me, Wang," he said, restoring the money to his pocket. "I did not mean to offer you charity; merely a reward for exceptional attention to duty. But I must be going. The Princess said eight, and it's nearly that now. Don't work any more tonight?"

He was gone.

"The Princess!" muttered Wang, jabbing the pen with which he had been writing so spitefully into the table that he shattered its point. "The lemon-haired, thick-lipped Princess, and she wants nothing of him save to amuse herself. He has saved her life, and now she will repay him by breaking his heart. I could kill her."

Having given vent to this ebullition of seeming jealousy, Wang proceeded to illustrate still farther the feminine nature of Corean boys, for he rested his head upon his arms and sobbed for some moments violently. After which he twisted his neck about and kissed the spot upon his shoulder where his master's hand rested.

Hardy, meanwhile, slipping into a long ulster, the fur collar of which he turned up about his ears, left the hotel and stepped to the edge of the sidewalk. A droshky dashed up immediately.

"The Princess Romanova," said he in Russian.

"The Princess Romanova, in the street--"

The isvoschik jumped down with extraordinary alacrity for a Russian.

#### THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA 224

"The Princess Romanova?" he inquired, looking shrewdly at Hardy.

"Yes," said Hardy, "in the street—"
"Get in," said the Russian, "and I will drive you there immediately. I know where it is."

There was something strange in the man's manner. so strange, in fact, that it set the American wondering. He acted as though he had been sent for his fare, or had been expecting him. But Hardy did not long dwell upon this idea, for he was, after all, on his way to the Princess. He would soon be in her presence again, and the thought so agitated him, so set his heart to beating, that all other matters were driven from his mind. He realized now, more strongly than ever before, that he was too deeply interested in her for his peace of mind, and he had seen enough of the customs of the country to lead him to believe that there was no hope of winning her hand. Old Emery's dictum that a Princess is but a woman afforded him little comfort. was a vast difference, he reflected, between marrying a tradesman, if one is a Russian Princess, and being kind to a man who has saved your life. If there were any chance for him, he would go in and win, to use an American expression, and if he failed, he would take his medicine like a man. But this going to see her in these circumstances was only It would make it the harder for him when it became necessary for him to go back to the store. Not that he admitted to himself any social inferiority. He was too good an American for that. He was taking into account the education and training of the Princess, and their probable effect upon the situation. This falling in love is a serious business. and a hopeless affection may wreck a man's life.

As these thoughts were running through Hardy's

mind, it occurred to him from time to time that it took a long time to reach the palace of the Princess. He knew about where it was located, though he had not visited the spot. It should have taken him fifteen minutes to drive there from the hotel. He consulted his watch and found that he had been half an hour on the road.

"Cabmen," he muttered, " are the same the world over. The fellow is driving me about for awhile

in order to increase the size of the bill."

He was on the point of opening the door and shouting to the isvoschik, when the latter drew up before a large square house in a quiet, poorly lighted street. Hardy threw open the door and jumped out.

### CHAPTER XXXIII

#### IN THE WRONG HOUSE

"So here we are at last," he said, "wait for me."

The house as he glanced up at it did not impress him as a palace, but he reflected that some of the older and most exclusive of the Muscovite nobility lived in antiquated and unpretentious residences. The isvoschik ran up the steps by his side and rang the bell. An old woman opened the door.

"Ah," she said to the cabman, "so you have

brought him!"

"Da! da!" replied the Jehu, and trudged down the steps. It was evident to Hardy that he was expected at the house of the Princess, that even the servants had been told to keep on the lookout for him. Probably this cabman had been sent for him. Hardy was shown into a small receptionroom, where a coal fire was burning in the grate. A couple of easy chairs and a leather-covered lounge, somewhat worn, formed the only furniture, rather meagre, it seemed to him, for the palace of a princess. He removed his coat and sat down before the fire. As the old woman had been expecting him, it was safe to assume that she had gone to inform Romanova of his arrival. He arose, and with fingers that trembled slightly, arranged his white tie at a mirror over the mantel. As he was thus engaged, he became aware that he could hear two men talking, probably in the hall, just outside the door.

"It is the most wonderful explosive ever invented," said one.

"Enough to fill the inside of a child's ball, is quite sufficient to wreck the Czar's palace—"

"Curse him!" interjected the other.

"Amen! It can therefore be thrown to a great distance, and whenever it strikes, it explodes. There is no missing fire. Several members of the order witnessed a trial of it in the Ural mountains, in a lonely spot, and the results were most satisfactory. A quantity of it hurled at the base of a cliff tore the whole face of the mountain loose. One of the brethren accidentally dropped a sphere of it, and he simply disappeared—vanished from the face of the earth. One of his arms was found two miles from the place, lying beside a mountain road."

"That would be good medicine for the Czar," chuckled a third voice.

"Yes, and for tyrants in general. With this new and mysterious explosive, the order has an agency by which it can become a terror to the ruling classes, by which it can demoralize society, and make way for the new order of things—the divine brotherhood of man. In six months from now there will not be a man living in Russia who will dare set himself up above his fellow creatures, or take his seat upon the tyrant-throne of Russia. To-night we shall select the brother who will throw the first sphere."

"But is it not fortunate," asked the second speaker, "that a member of the Enemies of Russia should have made this important discovery? This brother, Felix Hulin, is here—a slender, dark man with eye-glasses. The cabman that we sent brought him and he is now in the reception-room. Ah, but he has the air of a deep student! Let us go in and

make him welcome."

#### 228 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

Hardy, still fumbling with his tie, caught sight of his own face in the mirror, and was startled by its expression. It was the face of a man caught in a trap before he is discovered.

He was in a nihilists' den and had overheard a plot to kill the Czar. If it should be discovered that he was an impostor, he had little doubt as to what his fate would be. He seized his coat and hat and started toward the door. Three men entered, two well-dressed and the other evidently a labourer of some sort.

"Brother Hulin," said the tall man in imperfect French, "we welcome you among the Enemies of Russia. We know all about your marvellous discovery, and we consider you the greatest inventor of the age."

Hardy shook hands with them all three cordially. "I was," he said, also in French, "hoping to make a little address to the brethren to-night, for which I have prepared notes. I see that I have left these notes at my hotel and I feel uneasy about them. If they should fall into the hands of the police, it would be a serious matter for all of us. I told my cabman to wait; I will drive over to the hotel after them."

"Very well," said the tall man, "but don't be long, for there are many of the order here who are anxious to meet you."

Hardy stepped toward the door with a light heart, but just as he reached for the knob, the bell rang, and one of the nihilists opened the door and admitted the cabman with a slender, dark man who wore eye-glasses.

"I am Felix Hulin," announced the new arrival in perfect French, "and that man," pointing to Hardy, "is an impostor!"

## CHAPTER XXXIV

#### CONDEMNED TO DEATH

THE American, in immaculate evening dress, his crush hat beneath his elbow and his furlined coat thrown over his arm, stood at bay with his back against the wall, silently eyeing the nihilists. The blood rushed back upon his heart, and his cheek paled a trifle, but the glance which he fixed upon those wondering faces, in which hate and fear were beginning to dawn, showed no flinching. The cabman, in tall boots and shining silk hat of patent leather, stood at the door, with his broad back against it, his whip in his hand. He was a thick-set, broad-shouldered moujik, with little, red eyes, a red face, and a profuse red beard. His glance shifted uneasily from Hulin to Hardy.

By his side stood the little Frenchman, who sank his head between his shoulders like a turtle, and stretching an accusing left arm toward Hardy,

shrieked:-

"I am Felix Hulin, I say, mon Dieu! the great inventor, the great benefactor of the human race. Behold, here is the proof! If I dash this little sphere upon the floor, poof! b—r—r—r! The whole house will fall apart like a castle of cards, the roof will leap into the air, in one little second, by gar, we shall all be in eternity. Gentlemen, are you convinced? Sooner than have my word doubted, I shall give you the proofs. Ten thousand devils! I am Felix Hulin, I say, no man shall doubt me!"

He plunged his right hand into his pocket and

drew forth a sphere, about the size of a base ball, which he held in the hollow of his palm.

"I am Doctor Hulin," he added, "behold the pill which I have prepared for tyrants and spies!"

About twenty of the brethren had stolen into the hall and were pressing forward toward Hardy; "stolen," indeed, for these men all moved silently, as though accustomed to secret and dangerous meetings. But at the dreaded word "spy," a murmur arose.

"A spy! A spy! Kill him, tear him to pieces!" But the man who had welcomed Hardy in French

stepped in front of them and raised his hand.

"Sh! brethren," he commanded, "are you all mad? Would you have the police down upon us? The spy is in our power—if indeed he is a spy—and we shall know how to deal with him, how to seal his lips. As for you, brother Felix, do not drop your pill, in the Virgin's name! Put it in your pocket. Preserve it for tyrants and the enemies of mankind. There! We shall breathe freer now. Ivan" (to the cabman), "what is the history of this man? How did you happen to bring him here?"

"I went to the Gosteenneetsa to get a slender, dark man with eye-glasses," he explained, "who should give me the password for the night, "The Princess Romanovo. This man came out, hailed me, and gave me the password. I bring him here, and then, ten minutes later, along comes this other slender, dark foreigner in eye-glasses, who, it seems, is able to find his own way about! That is the truth, brother Bielinski, I call the Virgin to witness"; and the pious soul crossed himself.

"Very well," said Bielinski, a tall man, stoopshouldered, with thin, hook nose and keen, furtive eyes. "Very well. May I ask, my friend," turning to Hardy, "whether you are a member of the brother-

hood, and, if not, why you are here?"

"The explanation is very simple," replied Hardy, in French, in which language the question had been directed, "I am an American merchant, residing in Stretinsk. I have an acquaintance with the Princess Romanova, upon whom I was about to call. I told the cabman to drive me to her residence, and he brought me here. I know nothing of your amiable brotherhood, nor do I wish to learn anything."

Here he took out his watch and consulted it coolly. "As we have no possible business together, I will now bid you good-night, and proceed on my way. If I do not hasten, I shall be too late for my

call."

"But why does he not speak Russian?" asked Ivan. "He spoke to me in very good Russian."

"Do you understand Russian?" asked Bielinski.

"I speak it imperfectly," replied Hardy. "

have been in the country but a short time."

"You speak it well enough to understand," exclaimed Bielinski, "or you would not have made so shrewd an effort to get away. I am not sure now that you are not a spy. At any rate, it will be a long time before you will see your friend, the Princess Romanova."

Hardy noticed that the last two words were spoken with an emphasis of hate which reminded him of the Christian voices at Stretinsk, spitting out "Moschke! Moschke! The Jew! The Jew!" Truly this Holy Russia is a breeding ground for many and violent hates.

"You will hardly dare to retain an American

who is so well known as I am," he said.

"We dare do anything in the interests of humanity and brotherhood," replied Bielinski loftily.

"Brothers, retire silently into the council chamber till we decide what to do with the prisoner. You," to Hardy, "will come along with us. Make an outcry or resist, and you are a dead man on the instant."

"I will be a spectator of your interesting proceedings," replied Hardy, "since you insist. I am rather late for my engagement now, and fear that I must defer it to another evening." Here he consulted his watch again. "Would you kindly request our friend with the pills not to walk so close to the wall? Should he rub against it too hard, the result might be unfair to me, who am neither a tyrant nor a spy."

They all moved silently down to the extreme end of the hall, and passed through a door into a large square room, furnished with chairs and divans and a round table, upon which were a number of books and magazines. Crossing this, they entered the council chamber, a long narrow apartment, with benches running clear around it, and a long table in the centre, with chairs placed for about

twenty people.

The Enemies of Russia seated themselves upon the benches and at the table. Bielinski, who was evidently the chairman, took his place at the head of the table. Felix Hulin, after taking the terrible sphere from his pocket and laying it carefully upon the table on a tiny couch formed of his crumpled handkerchief, removed his overcoat and hung it upon a nail. He then took his seat, by invitation, at Bielinski's right.

"Brethren," said the latter, rising, "of the Society of the Enemies of Russia!" He spoke very distinctly, but not loud. The most absolute silence prevailed. "And by Russia we do not mean

this land in which we live, this part of the earth, but the vile government which oppresses us. For what is a country save a certain extent of the earth's surface which tyranny, under one guise or another, has selected for its own especial province for oppression? The nihilist, my friend, has no country that is to say, no Russia, no France, no Germany The whole world is his country, all mankind are his brothers. It is in this spirit that we have met to-night to welcome to our midst one of the greatest inventors of the age, the celebrated chemist, Felix Hulin, one of our brothers. He will explain to you the nature of his wonderful invention, which is to make thrones totter and tyrants tremble. I will assure you that it is all that he will represent it to you, as I have talked with one who witnessed his experiments in a lonely region of the Caucasus. He will make his speech in French, which I will undertake to translate for you into our own tongue. But first we must decide what to do with this man who has introduced himself into our midst, and has learned the secrets of the order. Though I do not personally believe him to be a spy, though I am confident that he was brought here by accident, yet he is not of us, and he is a friend of the haughty and wealth-pampered aristocrat whose name forms the password of the evening. He was on his way to her residence when he was brought here."

During this time Hardy remained standing, with his opera hat beneath his elbow and his ulster thrown over his arm. His eyes were fixed upon the little ball in Hulin's handkerchief, which, shining in the gas light, held his gaze with a strange fascination, like the baleful eye of a snake.

"What is his nationality?" asked one of the brethren.

"He says that he is an American," Bielinski

replied.

"The Americans," said the questioner, "are a powerful nation. If we should detain this man, who is himself evidently an aristocrat, his friends would raise heaven and earth to find him, and there would be much publicity, a thing that we wish to avoid now. The same thing would result if he should permanently disappear."

Here he sat down, and silence reigned for a full

minute.

"There is much truth," at length said Bielinski, "in what brother Smirnoff says. Has any other brother any suggestion to make?"

A young Russian arose, a florid-faced, cleanshaven youth, with blue eyes and a sweet expression. His voice was pleasing and he smiled as he talked.

"He must not disappear," said the speaker, "as brother Smirnoff says, neither can we keep him. He would be an elephant on our hands. Neither would it be safe to turn him loose with our secret in his brain and on his tongue. It seems to me, with all due deference to my elders," and here he smiled and waved his hand, "that there is but one way. He must die, and his body must be found under such circumstances that the police will be led to believe that he has met his fate through accident. This will come under the head, not of an execution, but of a necessary removal for the good of the order."

This was a suave, fluent speaker, a man of easy and natural gestures. His manner was confident and pleasing, and he appeared to be one of those who talk as much for practice and for the sake of hearing their own voices as for any other reason. Hardy sat down in a convenient chair and listened,

his gaze shifting from the face of the speaker to that of the shining ball in the handkerchief of Monsieur Hulin, that mesmeric spot on the table, the pill for tyrants and spies. He could not, somehow, quite realize his danger. He felt more like a man in a dream. But a short while ago he was a free man, out in the streets, on his way to the Princess Romanova, who even now was waiting for him and wondering why he did not appear. Now he was here, if indeed he were not dreaming, in a nihilists' den, an unwilling eavesdropper at a plot to blow the Czar into kingdom come.

"What method would you propose, brother

Kourbski?" inquired Bielinski.

"There are several methods that naturally suggest themselves," replied Kourbski, expansively. Hardy's eyes left the mesmeric spot and sought the speaker's face.

"For instance, he might be chloroformed and thrown into the Moskva, thus giving the impression that he had fallen in and drowned; or a fine needle might be driven into the base of his brain, after which he could be dropped into the river; or he could be taken out to some lonely spot, gagged, of course, to prevent an outcry, stabbed or beaten to death, and robbed. The gags could then be removed, and this would cause the impression that he had been killed by footpads for his money and valuables. Fortunately, his attire, that of a wealthy aristocrat, would corroborate that impression. These are merely suggestions, of course. Would it not be well to decide officially upon his fate, and then appoint a committee to settle the manner of his removal?"

Mr. Kourbski sat down and glanced about with self-satisfaction.

# 236 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

"It is time," said Bielinski, rising and resting both palms upon the table, "to bring this incidental discussion to a close, and proceed with the more important business of the evening. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with the great work which we have in hand, the destruction of so-called government and the establishment of universal freedom; the elimination of war, oppression and tyranny, and the inauguration of general and everlasting peace, equality and brotherhood."

As Bielinski spoke, his face flushed with enthusiasm, and his eyes glowed with the light of the dreamer and the Utopian. Murmurs of approval

ran through the audience.

"You know," he continued, "how we propose to accomplish this great end. Government is merely a combination of the strong and the favoured of the earth to oppress the weak. Laws are simply canons for the regulation of oppression. All these things are unnatural and artificial and are built upon a substructure of superstition. We propose to render government impossible by making the governing profession so dangerous that no man will dare undertake it. But the question now before us is this: here is a man in our midst who is not of us. He is a sympathizer with and a friend of our oppressors. He came to us supposing that he was going to the house of the Princess Romanova, and overheard our plans. He has located our place of meeting. Will it be safe to turn him loose. after exacting a promise from him that he will not betray us, if such a promise can be obtained, or is it your mind that he be removed, as Brother Kourbski suggests, for the good of the order? In voting upon this question you will bear in mind that the life of any one individual is of small moment when weighed in the balance against the general good of humanity. Brother Smirnoff will pass among you, handing each one of you a white and a black marble, a supply of which I have here, and brother Kourbski will collect your ballots in a hat. A black ballot will signify removal, a white ballot life and some other expedient. Brother Smirnoff!"

That member arose and stepped briskly to the chairman's side, who took a number of marbles from a drawer and poured them into a hat. Kourbski followed him with another hat, into which the members dropped their votes. In the ghastly silence which reigned, Hardy could hear his heart beat plainly, and the marbles dropping, dropping into the hat, rattled like paving stones falling from a height. As Kourbski stepped to the table and poured the marbles upon it, the American arose, and mechanically twitching at his pince-nez, gazed with open mouth. A black stream poured from the hat.

"The ballots are all black!" announced the chairman. "I will appoint brothers Kourbski, Stankieitch and Golovlev as a committee of three on ways and means. Gentlemen, you will retire into the adjoining room. Kindly reach your decision as soon as possible, for this, as I have said, is but an incidental matter, and we have much of importance before us."

The three members retired, closing the door softly behind them. The dream was becoming reality. Hardy, who was still standing, glanced about him like a trapped animal, his eyes hunting some desperate means of escape. There was the window. He might dash at that and leap at the panes. The crash and the outcry which he would make might attract the attention of some passer-by. But, alas, the majority of the company were sitting between him and the window, and the shutters,

which he could discern through the thick curtains. were no doubt heavy and well secured. His overcoat dropped to the floor and a scarcely audible "bump" attracted his attention. He picked up the garment, and slid his hand into the pocket, where it touched the cold handle of a revolver. He remembered that a merchant had given him the weapon in the morning as a sample of a large stock of German imitations that could be sold at a much lower price than the American original. The merchant had said that it was a good weapon, despite the cheapness, and had requested him to try it.

But it was not loaded.

At this moment the committee re-entered the room. They had transacted their grizzly business with dispatch. Kourbski acted as spokesman.

"Mr. Chairman and brethren," he announced. "we have decided that the most practical method is to bind the prisoner and drive an awl into the base of his brain. We have with us here a shoemaker who can do the business scientifically. Then, in the early hours of the morning, when the street is deserted, we can throw him into brother Ivan's cab, drive him to some lonely spot on the banks of the Moskva and drop him into the water."

"The committee already appointed will act in this matter," said Bielinski, in a business-like tone, "with the addition of brother Ivan, who is a strong man, and the shoemaker."

Ivan and the shoemaker arose, and the five men turned toward Hardy, who, during the absence of the committee had been staring at the mesmeric spot of light upon the table.

"Gentlemen!" he cried, backing to the wall, and speaking with an inspiration born of despair and the immediate presence of a horrible death,

"hear me for one moment!"

The suddenness of his appeal caused his appointed executioners to halt, while every face in the audience turned toward him in wonderment. "No man is ever executed without being allowed a last word—a farewell. Even the law, which you say is an invention of tyrants, permits that! Surely, as you say that you are killing me in the interests of humanity, you cannot be unjust and savage. All I ask is one word before I die, a parting message, perhaps, to be given to my friends."

"Speak then," commanded Bielinski, "but be brief, as we have weighty matters to discuss. Do not waste your breath in pleading for mercy."

"I was going to visit the Princess Romanova," said Hardy, pale as death, but speaking distinctly, "not because I am an aristocrat, for I come from America, the most democratic country on earth. I was invited to visit her because I saved her life on the Amur through my skill with the pistol. My skill, which has made me famous in my native land, enabled me to kill two Chinamen who were attempting to abduct her. It is second nature to me. I shoot with absolute precision. Had I my weapon here I could pick off in succession from where I stand, the buttons of Mr. Bielinski's coat."

"What is that to us?" asked the chairman. "You are talking to gain time. Give us your parting message, and we will try to get it to those for whom it is intended."

"I could hit," proceeded Hardy, "that explosive ball yonder, the invention of Monsieur Hulin, and blow you all to atoms, and by God! if any one here stirs, or attempts to lay hands on me, I'll do it!"

With these words, he suddenly whipped the pistol from his pocket, and leaning forward, aimed at the ball.

#### CHAPTER XXXV

#### "IN THE NAME OF THE CZAR!"

THE nihilists were thrown into panic by this sudden move on the part of Hardy. For the moment he was in control of the situation, though he was well aware that he could not remain so for long.

His arm would tire, or a quick move on the part of one of the members would obscure the ball from

his sight.

He must decide upon the next step instantly. In the meantime every face in that room was turned toward him, pale, eager, agape. On many fear had set its stamp unmistakably, and Hardy fancied that the hair had actually arisen in fright upon several heads. One man sprang to the window, against the frame of which he had set his palms and was looking back at the American over his shoulder. The others were cowering in their seats.

All doubt as to the genuineness of the "pill" was dissipated by a glance at the countenance of that great inventor, Monsieur Hulin, dark in its normal state, now in a yellowish green. His teeth were chattering, and he was licking his thin lips in a fever of fear. It was evident that these people had no relish for their own medicine.

"Do not shoot," faltered Bielinski, "perhaps some other arrangement can be made in your case! Perhaps something else can be thought of! I have no doubt something else can be thought of!"

"If a single member moves," said Hardy, in a clear, ringing voice, "I shall certainly shoot. And now, hear my terms. I must be allowed to go. I shall back out of this door behind me. If any one opens the door while I am crossing the adjoining room, I shall shoot to kill, and the noise will probably bring the police down upon you. I promise you that I will not notify the police of your plot nor point out your place of meeting till twelve hours after my escape. Now repeat after me: 'We call the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, the Virgin Mary and all the Saints to witness——' Repeat, I say, every man of you, in concert—I give you till I count three to begin!" He extended his arm, the elbow of which was resting against his side, and sighted along the pistol. "One, two-" A murmur arose, as of a congregation, repeating in response:—

"We call the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost,

the Virgin and all the saints to witness-"

"Very good! But speak louder. 'That we will permit the American to pass freely from this house.'"

"That we will permit the American to pass freely from this house——" came the response, louder this time.

"And we call down upon our heads the vengeance of God and all the saints, if he is interfered with and his departure prevented!"

This also was repeated in chorus by the nihilists "If we break this oath, may we all come to violent ends, and our souls burn in hell for ever! Amen!"

said Hardy.

"If we break this oath, may we all come to violent ends, and our souls burn in hell for ever, Amen," said the nihilists.

The American, still aiming at the sphere, backed

to the door, passed through it after some little nervous fumbling for the knob, closed it behind him and started to run rapidly across the empty room, in which he now found himself, not without, however, making an effort to lock the door, which was impossible, as there was no key on the outside, and no bolt.

A savage uproar broke loose in the room which he had just quitted—the sound of men struggling, curses, shouts; and ere he had traversed half the distance of the hall the door behind him flew open, and half a dozen nihilists were vomited forth. Several of them were armed, and, pointing pistols at Hardy, they shrieked:—

"Drop that revolver or we shoot! You cannot

escape 1"

"But your oath!" he cried, facing them.

"Oath, hell! Do you think an oath binds us? Can any one live in Russia and believe in God?"

At this moment the hall door was thrown open and a man rushed to Hardy's side. It was Mordecai, the Jew, with his red eyes, his bushy red whiskers and his big hook nose.

"Mr. Hardy!" he cried, "my dear pupil," and he sprang between the American and the pistols which were pointed at the latter's body. "Stop, brothers, stop!" he shrieked. "What madness is this? What is this man accused of? I know him. He is a friend. I will vouch for him on my life. I will defend him. If you kill him you must kill me too!"

"He is a friend of aristocrats," explained Bielinski, stepping forward, "he entered here by mistake, he says, but it is possible that he is a spy. At any rate he knows our secret, he has overheard our plans and he will betray us. He must die."

"And I say that he shall not die," cried Mordecai.

"It was he who braved the Russian mob at Stretinsk and saved my life. He is no spy nor aristocrat, he is a simple merchant, an American. Though he does not belong to the order, he is in spirit a brother, as he is a friend of the down-trodden and the oppressed, for whom he is willing to risk his life."

"He is also willing to risk his life for aristocrats," hissed one of the nihilists. "It was he who saved

the Princess Romanova on the Amur."

"I admit it," replied the Jew, "and I would that he had not done it—curse her and all her foul kin! But in saving her life he was fighting also for his own. Shall a man die if he can live? But I tell you he risked his own life to save mine, and I am a despised and persecuted Jew. My mother was murdered through the connivance of the Russian authorities. Who doubts my fidelity to the cause? Who has more reason than I to hate the government—all governments?"

"Mordecai is a Jew," cried one of the nihilists: he would betray us for thirty pieces of silver. Let

us kill them both!"

And at this that old murmur arose, that burden of hate which in Russia is stronger than hate of the government or the aristocrats or of oppression, that shibboleth which makes all Russians brothers, high and low:—

"Moschke! Moschke! The Jew! The Jew!"

"My brave friend," said Hardy, "they are going to shoot now. Save yourself!" and grabbing the grateful Jew by the shoulder, he jerked him suddenly from his feet and sent him sprawling to the floor.

The game was played out. The mad fanatics before him, wild-eyed, some with pistols in their hands, some with knives, others with their fingers bent

# 244 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

like the talons of birds of prey, were intent upon his death. Had his own weapon been loaded, he might still have checked them long enough to escape through the door, by a shot or two. But they had forgotten his weapon in their passion, and there was no way to remind them of its existence. Nothing save the ringing report of a shot would penetrate that delirium of malice. The hatred bred of ages of wrong was overflowing from those embittered hearts, and, like the angry waters bursting from a broken dam, it would not stop to choose its victim.

Hardy closed his eyes and commended his soul to God, when a loud hammering was heard upon the outer or street door.

"Silence!" gasped Bielinski, in a whisper, a whisper, nevertheless, that could be heard more distinctly in the sudden silence than a shout. "What is that?"

As if in answer to his question, the door giving into the hall flew wide, and the old woman looked in, dishevelled and pale, moaning, as she crossed herself rapidly:—

"The police! The police!"

Again that thundering upon the door sounded through the house, and a stern voice could be heard commanding:—

"Open, in the name of the Czar!"

Hardy was forgotten. The Czar, their arch enemy, was at the gates of their fortress, and his name was a word of terror. The nihilists flew past the American on tiptoe, into the hall, several of them jostling and almost knocking him over in their eagerness to escape.

"Come with me!" whispered Baruch, who had regained his feet. "You must not be found here'!!" and, seizing Hardy by the arm, he also jumped for

# "IN THE NAME OF THE CZAR" 245

the open door. Hardy made no resistance, and was soon running down the long hall with the others, accompanied by the Jew. They came to a narrow flight of stairs, leading to the cellar, and down this they crowded, scrambling and fighting, some of them losing their footing and rolling to the bottom. A loud crash arrested Hardy's attention. He was standing in the darkness, but at the farther end of the hall was a hanging lamp, turned low, and by the light of this he could see the door fly in splinters and the officers of the law pour in.

"Throw your bomb, brother; throw your bomb!" said Bielinski, and Hulin, leaping like a cat into the middle of the passage, hurled the sphere down the hall with an oath. There was a muffled report, not loud, and much jingling of glass. The light went out, but by the momentary flash of the explosive Hardy could see several policemen pitch forward

on their faces.

"Come, come away!" said Mordecai, and Hardy scurried down the dark cellar steps with the Jew.

#### CHAPTER XXXVI

#### ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES ANOTHER

THEY were in utter darkness now. Above could be heard a hoarse uproar, faint and confused, shouts and sounds of heavy boots on the flooring; here in the cellar, the shuffling feet of the escaping nihilists, the bump or rattle of an occasional obstruction kicked or run against, muttered oaths. Mordecai still holding Hardy by the arm, pulled him rapidly across the cellar, until they stumbled against the feet of men crawling upon their hands and knees. The American pitched forward upon the back of one of these, who kicked at him savagely and swore a foul oath under his breath.

"Get down," whispered Mordecai, "and crawl, crawl with me!"

They passed through an opening in the wall, so low that it brought the American flat upon his stomach, and yet scratched his back. That it was barely wide enough for two at a time was evident from the fact that though he had crowded close to Mordecai the wall scraped his right side. They were through in a trice, and still in utter darkness. The sound of scuffling feet again could be heard, of the nihilists fleeing.

"The fools!" muttered Mordecai, "they forgot

to put back the stone."

It was evident from his grunts and a scraping

sound that he was struggling with some heavy object.

"There," he muttered at last, "it is flush now, and just in time! Listen, my dear pupil, do you not hear them? They are in the cellar. Put your

ear against the wall."

Hardy did as requested, and he could indeed hear faint sounds on the other side of the wall.

"Where are we now?" he asked.

"We are in the cellar of the adjoining house, belonging to a member of the order. The brothers have escaped by an underground passage—by an old forgotten sewer. But it will not be safe for you to follow them. They will have recovered their wits by this time, and some of them will lie in wait for you and kill you, feeling sure that you will tell what you have seen and heard."

Hardy's eyes were now becoming accustomed to the darkness, and in the distance he could see a slit of dim, grey light. He felt his way to it, colliding with a barrel and hitting his head against a hanging shelf on the way. By the sense of touch he assured himself that he had arrived at the cellar window, boarded up, and that the slit of grey light came through an imperfect joining. The door must be somewhere near. With his fingers against the wall, he took several steps to the left without finding it; then he returned to the right, made the same experiment and his efforts were rewarded with success.

Mordecai was at his side.

"What are you going to do?" asked the Jew.

"I am going to walk boldly out of this door," replied Hardy. "The explosion will have drawn the whole neighbourhood to the front of the house, on the other street, and I shall not be noticed. If I am, I can explain how I came here, and how I

248

escaped. I am going to chance it, and the quicker I go the better," and he pushed back the heavy bolt, which he had found by this time. "Good bye, my friend, and thank you. I suppose you will rejoin your brethren. You have saved my life and I shall never forget it. For your sake, I will say nothing about what I have seen and heard this night. The nest is broken up for the present, and the police do not seem to need my aid."

"Go, then," said Mordecai, "and farewell, and luck go with you! I shall attempt to escape alone. I shall not rejoin those ingrates. I became one of them to avenge the death of my mother, but there is no place for the Jew in Russia, either among the friends or the enemies of the government. I shall

go back to America."

"Good bye," said Hardy, once more, "my dear friend and teacher"; and he took the thin, clammy hand in his, pressing it warmly.

"Good bye!" sobbed Mordecai, "my dear

pupil!"

Hardy opened the door and stepped out. He closed it quietly behind him and ran up the cellar steps into the starlight. He was in a back yard surrounded by a high fence, over which a street lamp, peeping, cast its yellow gleam over a midnight world of snow. He walked briskly down a broad path, passed out of a gate into an alley, and hurried away. As he had anticipated, no one noticed him. The half dozen police who had been stationed at the rear of the adjoining house had run around to the front to the aid of their brothers, on hearing the explosion.

The American walked a couple of squares, then turned sharply to the right and gained the main street. He was safe now, and, hailing a passing cab,

he ordered the isvoschik to take him to the Gosteenneetsa Russia. As he stood on the walk, waiting for the vehicle to draw up, he felt chilly and, his excitement having subsided somewhat, made a discovery that gave him a shock and filled him with a feeling of uneasiness that was destined to possess him for many days to come.

He had left his overcoat behind somewhere in that den of nihilists! He got into the cab, and as it tore through the streets, the wheels, squealing in the snow, he sat there shivering, his chin in his hand, racking his brain to remember, if possible, whether there was anything in the pockets—a letter, cards, a cigar case—that might betray the identity of the owner. To save his life he could not settle this point in his mind.

It was one o'clock when he reached the hotel. To his surprise, he found Wang sitting up, reading. The boy sprang to his feet, trembling with delight.

"Ah, my dear master!" he cried, "so here you are at last!"

"But why did you not go to bed, Wang?" asked Hardy, not unkindly. "You look pale and tired. You have been working too hard lately, and you need sleep."

"I fell asleep," replied Wang, "and I had a horrible dream about you. I thought you were in a cave filled with poisoned snakes, all about your feet, and hanging writhing from the ceiling, close to your head. It seemed to me that you did not dare to stir, nor even to breathe, for fear they would strike you, and I, who was looking in at the entrance, could not help you—could not cry out nor even move a finger, for the same reason. For a moment all the snakes seemed unaware of your presence, then one, at the far end of the cave, fixed his twink-

ling, malignant eyes on you, and began to glide through the noisome, poisonous mass toward your face. Closer and closer he came, and just as he drew back his head to strike, I awoke. Ugh!

'Twas a frightful dream."

"Yes," laughed Hardy nervously, "it certainly was a nasty nightmare, but pure imagination, I assure you, for I have been in no cave filled with snakes. Now go to bed, I command you. Good night!" Hardy passed into the adjoining room, and went to bed but he got but little sleep that night. He was listening for the tramp of heavy feet upon the stairs, the thumping of a sword-hilt against his bedroom door, and that gruff command again, which he had already heard once:—

"Open, in the name of the Czar!"

But the hours passed and he was undisturbed, and just as the grey light of dawn began to sift in through the curtains, he fell into a sound slumber. It was fully ten o'clock when he went out into his office and sent for his coffee. As he was drinking it, Wang entered in great excitement, with a newspaper.

"Look at this!" cried the boy. "The police raided a den of nihilists last night, and the latter threw a bomb, killing four of the officers and wounding six others. It was the society known as The Enemies of Russia," made up of disaffected Russians, Poles, Finns, even Jews—all who hate this accursed

government."

Hardy glanced at the boy, marvelling much at the revelation of hate in that ingenuous word "accursed."

"Why are you an enemy of Russia?" he asked.

"Oh, for no particular reason," faltered the boy, turning pale. "I—perhaps I am not. The nihilists

all disappeared, as though the earth had swallowed them up. Not a thing was left to prove the identity of a member, except one costly fur-lined overcoat, which proves that this society numbers among its members some of the wealthier classes, perhaps the nobility. I tell you," and Wang struck the paper with his right hand, in his excitement, "that this country is a house divided against itself. Leave it alone, and it will work out its own destruction—and salvation!"

The boy's eyes were flashing and his cheeks were so aflame with excitement that the scar nearly disappeared.

Hardy gulped down his coffee and started for the

door.

"If anybody calls for me, Wang," he said, "tell them that I will be back in an hour."

He did return within that time, wearing an exact duplicate of the overcoat which he had lost the night before. And still there were no signs of the police. He felt reassured. Had there been any tell-tale letters, cards or documents in the pockets of the missing garment, the officers of the law, he reasoned, would have lost no time in laying hands upon him.

#### CHAPTER XXXVII

#### ROMANOFF BECOMES INSOLENT

THE Princess Romanova was attired in a gown of pale blue silk, decolleté, trimmed with dainty cream lace. Her neck was encircled by a string of pearls, of priceless purity, evenness of size and perfection of form. There was something in the creamy softness and whiteness of her skin, faintly, almost imperceptibly, glowing with the warm red hue of health and youth, that suggested the delicate tinting of the interior of a sea-shell, or foam shot through with the first rays of the morning sun; and the pearls seemed at home with such a background.

Her shoulders were so exquisitely scuplted that revealment became a duty and a matter of course. Immodesty is the child of ugliness. Her arms were round and firm and beautiful! When she bent them, there was no angle at the elbow, or unsightly projection, but a perfect, graceful curve, and when she straightened them out, the skin did not wrinkle there and corrugate, but dimpled ravishly.

Hardy, accustomed to fashionable and high-bred women, noticed, as she advanced toward him with welcoming hand extended, that her soft, light hair was parted in the middle and combed low over her broad forehead, and that the thick, glossy knot, confined in an invisible net, was set low down at the nape of her neck.

She held her head high and haughtily, as the head of a queen, yet her red, full lips parted in a dazzling smile, and perfect friendliness shone from her blue

eves

"I received your note at ten o'clock this morning,"

she said in French, in the most natural way in the world, as though she had seen him but yesterday, "and, fortunately, I had no unavoidable engagement until I-

Hardy arose from the chair in which he sat awaiting her entrance. They stood in the centre of a luxurious salon, flooded with a soft rose-coloured light from electric bulbs ingeniously disposed about the ceiling.

"I was very sorry," he replied, "to disappoint myself last evening, and also to put you to any possible annoyance in waiting for me. But the fact

"But," she exclaimed, in her own tongue; "you are positively speaking Russian. And so perfectly, too! I can hardly believe my ears. It is incredible! But don't let's remain standing here like two posts. Sit down-over here-and we will have a nice cosy talk. I can give you two full hours."

She crossed the room to a low divan, and seated herself comfortably upon one end of it, among a

mass of luxurious pillows.

Hardy took his place beside her and said easily :-"The hope of conversing with you sometime, in your own tongue, Princess, has been a great incentive to me in my studies of Russian. Without that incentive I should scarcely have made such progress as you are kind enough to credit me with."

He was at home now, more at home than in the store at Stretinsk, or the wholesale houses of the Moscow merchants, and these words of delicate

flattery came naturally to his lips.

The Princess flashed one quick, searching look at him. The man was a gentleman, in the conventional sense, as well as a hero, and no more afraid of a princess than of a Chinese brigand.

## 254 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

"So you learned Russian that you might talk with me!" she laughed, with a slight tinge of coquetry. "How perfectly charming. But," she pouted, "I fear that your desperate struggles with the terrible Russian tongue is but a poor compliment to my French. Did you then find that so unintelligible?"

"Not at all," he replied, "except so far as my own poor mastery of it rendered it so. But my desire to converse with you in Russian was quite natural. I used often to wish that I could understand you when you were talking on the Amur steamer. Besides, Russian, as spoken by you, seemed a very beautiful language, and one well worth acquiring."

She did not see fit to pursue this topic farther. "You shall always speak Russian with me, then. By the way, have you heard anything further from your heroic friend Smulders? I hope you have not lost all trace of him. I should so like to know how his love-affair with the fair but tantalizing 'Chulia' came out."

"Of that I am able to inform you, as I have recently heard from Smulders. He and 'Chulia' are married and living in Amsterdam. Smulders is in the seventh heaven of happiness."

The Princess clapped her little hands with joy. "Isn't that delightful," she exclaimed, "to hear of a love-affair that ends happily? And I have no doubt that 'Chulia' will settle down into a sensible, affectionate wife, and repay him for all his sufferings. Was not that a terrible happening last night—the killing and wounding of those poor officers? The nihilists are becoming bolder and bolder every day. Only the severest measures will stamp out this evil of nihilism. There is no other way to deal 'with these misguided men, who, if they could

255

but be made to see it, are their own worst enemies. Could they know how it grieves the Little Father to be severe with any of his children, they would not resort to violence."

"Do you know the Czar?" asked Hardy.

"Oh, quite well. I assure you that he has the heart of a woman, and that he loves all his people as a mother loves her children. His constant care and study is how he may better their condition; and many are the sleepless nights which he passes, till his physicians are positively alarmed lest he wreck his health, worrying over the sorrows of the poor and the down-trodden, and devising ways for the amelioration of their condition. You little realize the difficulies that he has to contend with."

"I suppose not. And yet we in America have a pretty good idea of the nobility of his character and the goodness of his heart. There is no reigning monarch of the world more highly respected in democratic America to-day then the Czar of autocratic Russia."

"Oh, I am glad to hear you say that!" exclaimed the Princess, her beautiful eyes dimming with a mist of tears. "I shall tell him of this when next I see him, and I assure you that these words, coming from an American, will afford him great satisfaction. But you must not call us 'Autocratic Russia,' for there is no more democratic people in the world than our Russians. I assure you that no one is interfered with who obeys the laws. But when men plot to murder and kill, what can you do with them? What did you do with your own anarchists not so many years ago in Chicago? Let me see, how many did you hang from one scaffold? Twenty-five, was it not?"

"Oh, dear no! We are not so—ah—wholesale

as all that in America. Only five were condemned and four executed. One committed suicide."

"Well, the affair made a great impression in Russia, and confirmed the authorities in the theory that drastic measures would, in time, be effectual. By those executions anarchy was stamped out in America, as we kill a snake by stamping on its head. I wish it could as easily be destroyed here. I am sorry for the families of the killed and wounded officers! I have started a subscription for them, which has already been generously responded to."

"May I put my name down for a small amount?"

asked Hardy.

"It would be so generous of you! But it does not seem right to allow you to contribute to the relief of people who are not even your own countrymen."

"I should be very glad to subscribe to this," replied Hardy, "for I can understand the destitute condition in which these women and children must be left, and the case strongly appeals to my sympathies. But even if I didn't know all about it, I should be quite sure that I was right in contributing to any charity that had your approval."

The Princess laughed, as she arose.

"You forget that we were talking Russian," she said.

" Why?"

"It is only in the French tongue that one pays these delicate compliments. But excuse me at this moment, till I get my list of contributions."

She left the room and returned almost immediately

with a paper, which she handed to Hardy.

"It's good of you," he said, "to let me in on this. It will give me great pleasure to put my name down to such a cause, especially when it is headed by so fair a promoter."

"Mais vraiement, vous m'obligerez á parler Français," exclaimed the Princess.

Hardy noticed that the list was headed "Elizabetha Romanova, 1,000 roubles," and that several others had contributed equal sums. The last name thus far obtained, and next to which Hardy must sign, was that of Boris Romanoff, who was down for 2,000 roubles.

The American was puzzled for a moment. He knew why this handsome, dare-devil Russian had subscribed so large an amount. That Boris Romanoff was touched by the sufferings of the poor was a thought to bring a smile to the face of any who chanced to know him.

Hardy was not rich, as we know. He had saved a few thousands from his fortune, and his salary and profits from commissions brought him a respectable income. He held his indelible pen for a moment suspended, as he remarked, looking the Princess quizzically in the eye.

"Your cousin is very tender-hearted, is he not—

quite charitably disposed?"

"He has responded handsomely, has he not?" she replied carelessly, but there was an amused look in her eye. "But he is rich, and doesn't mind a little sum like this. Besides, he knew that I am anxious to make these poor people comfortable."

Hardy scribbled his name upon the paper and

handed it back to the Princess.

"But, monsieur!" she gasped, "my friend, I could not accept this much from you! You have made some mistake here!"

He adjusted his gold pince-nez, looked critically

at the paper and read sotto-voce:

"Frederick Courtland Hardy...roubles 2,500. No; that is quite correct, your Highness. I shall

take great pleasure in sending you a cheque in the morning. You have little idea how this cause appeals to me."

She flushed and held the paper in her hand for

some moments in silence, looking at it.

"The Americans are as generous as they are brave," she said at last, in a low voice. "I will accept this noble gift on behalf of my poor people, in whose name I thank you."

At this moment a servant appeared at the door

and announced,

"Lieutenant Gortchakov!"

"I regret that I must be leaving you now," said the Romanova! "But stay! I should like to introduce you to the Lieutenant. He is a great admirer of America and Americans. Show the lieutenant in, Aleko."

The lieutenant entered, tall, in his twenties, slender and very handsome. He was attired in the uniform of the Imperial Guard. Seeing the Princess, he bowed very low, clicking his heels together. Then he walked rapidly to her, and, bending with exquisite grace and assurance, lifted her hand and kissed it. Then he turned politely and inquiringly toward Hardy, who arose.

"Lieutenant Gortchakov," said the Princess, "this is Mr. Hardy, the brave American of whom you have heard me speak. I desire you to be friends.

"It gives me great pleasure to make your acquaintance," said the lieutenant, extending his hand.

"The pleasure is mine, I assure you," replied

Hardy.

"General Popoff has already told me of your heroic deeds upon the Amur," added the lieutenant. "I have been hoping for some time that I might have the honour of meeting you. I had no idea that you were in Moscow."

Gortchakov was a frank, ingenuous youth, to whom the American took an immediate liking.

"I will leave you two together," said the Princess, rising "while I go and get my wraps. Oh, by the way, Alexieff, why can we not drive Mr. Hardy by the Hotel Russia? The lieutenant has a new pair of white Arabian horses, which he is anxious for me to see. I am sure that Mr. Hardy can appreciate fine horses."

"I shall be most happy," replied the lieutenant, "if Mr. Hardy will accept."

"Oh, I am sure he will," laughed the Princess,

"if he is sufficiently urged."

The Princess left the room, and Gortchakov began to explain that he was driving her to a reception, and that the Russia would be right on the way. He had not been talking over a minute when Boris Romanoff entered, superbly handsome in evening dress. An older man accompanied him. Romanoff shook hands cordially with Gortchakov, whom he addressed as "Aleko," and to whom he introduced his companion, General Koukolnik.

He did not introduce Koukolnik to Hardy, but

said to the latter, with an evil, insolent smile.

"Hello, Hardy, how's trade? But these Americans are enterprising!" he explained affably to the general. "This fellow here is a store-keeper, who, it seems, is working the Russian nobility for all he is worth. What's your scheme now? Tell us, that's a good fellow! You shall have our influence with the Princess—she ought to be an easy mark under the circumstances—eh, general?"

The American paled with rage, but he looked Romanoff full in the eyes, returning insolence for

insolence.

### CHAPTER XXXVIII

#### A BLOW AND A CHALLENGE

"BEING only a merchant," replied the American, "I find it necessary to cultivate good manners to a certain extent. Were I a prince, I

might also be a boor."

"Upon my soul!" exclaimed General Koukolnik, "but this is a very peppery merchant!" The general's cheeks and nose were adorned with a network of varicose veins, the result of innumerable deep potations of vodka. He was that anomalous combination, an excitable fat man, and he had a habit of jerking so fiercely at his long pointed sidewhiskers that he pulled down the puffy under lid of his eye, disclosing the red conjunctiva.

Romanoff flushed with rage.

"Fellow," said he, "I am not going to waste any words with you. I grant you a certain degree of courage, considerable shrewdness and any amount of insolence. But you are making a sad mistake if you hope to force your way into high society, simply because you happened to kill a Chinaman or two on the Amur. You may take advantage of my cousin's good-nature, but you cannot impose on the rest of us. The best thing for you to do is to accept a good, substantial cheque for your services to the family, and take yourself off. How much shall it be?" and he pulled a cheque book from his pocket.

"Better take my advice and secure it now, while we are in the mood, and the offer is open."

"Upon my soul!" exclaimed Koukolnik.

"I suppose that I shall be offended at this later," drawled Hardy, "when I get to thinking it over. At present you are too interesting as a study in—ah—zoology. I do not believe there is such another boor and ruffian living in all Moscow as you. Certainly, the Russians of the better class that I have

met thus far have all been gentlemen."

"I trust this doesn't bore you, Aleko, nor you, general," said Romanoff, "but I really must settle with this fellow once and for all, and have it over with. I met him first in Japan, where he played a low trick, for which he no doubt received money from the Japanese authorities. He became infatuated with a woman of disreputable character there, and he and the woman had me put upon a boat, ostensibly sailing for Vladivostok. I soon found out that I was to be imprisoned or put to death. This fellow remained in Japan with his paramour, and he came on here afterwards at his leisure. I have had him watched since by the police, and it is certain that he is an enemy of the government, and perhaps a Japanese spy. It is known that he consorts with Jews, and I strongly suspect that he is himself an American Jew. The Romanoff family is, unfortunately, under certain obligations to him, for which I am offering to pay him liberally. Come now, my man, how much shall it be?"

"There must surely be some mistake here," said Gortchakov. "I was introduced to Mr. Hardy by the Princess, who recommended him to me as a possible friend. What have you to say to these

accusations of the prince, Mr. Hardy?"

"Nothing," replied the American, "save that

262

if we were not under the roof of a lady, I should tell Romanoff that I cannot believe that he is mistaken——"

"You would have us think, then?" suggested Gortchakov—

"That he is undoubtedly lying!"

"Have a care!" cried Romanoff, raising his voice.
"Do not presume too far on the protection of the Princess! Once more, and for the last time, I ask you, how much do you want?" and he thrust the cheque book under Hardy's nose.

"You are positively growing tiresome," said Hardy, and with a motion he flipped the book from Romanoff's fingers, so that it flew fluttering half-

way cross the room.

"Hell and furies!" exclaimed Romanoff. "Take that, you son of a dirty Jewess!" and he struck Hardy violently in the face with the flat of his hand. The blow staggered the American and left a number of red welts, that contrasted strangely with the marble whiteness of his cheeks.

"This insult must be answered for elsewhere, he said, in low, even tones. "Lieutenant Gortachakov, I am a comparative stranger here; will you do me the honour of seconding me in this affair?"

"You want me to fight a duel with you?" laughed Romanoff. "With you, a Jew store-keeper? Leave this house instantly, or I shall

have you kicked into the street."

"I am a American," Hardy explained to Gortchakov, "and the gentlemen of America earn their living by honest toil. Moreover, I am by birth and education a gentleman. Will you be my second?"

Gortchakov caught sight of a stately white figure standing in a distant door; the figure of a tall woman wearing a long white opera cloak, a coronet blazing with white diamonds surmounting her regal brow. He extended his hand to Hardy.

"I will be your second," he said.

"Are you mad, Aleko?" said Romanoff. "I cannot fight with this low fellow, this tradesman."

"I know Mr. Hardy through the introduction of the Princess Romanova," declared Aleko, raising his voice, "and that is quite sufficient for me."

"You will either fight me or I will horsewhip you in the public streets," Hardy insisted. "I knew you to be a liar; I did not suspect that you were also a coward."

"Gentlemen, for shame!" cried the Princess, advancing to the angry group, her eyes blazing with indignation. "Do you forget that you are in my house?"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Koukolnik, "it is the Princess. Madame, I humbly salute you," and, clicking his heels together, he made a low bow.

"Ah, good evening, cousin," said Romanoff.
"I beg your pardon for this disturbance, but really this fellow here is to blame. I offered to pay him for the service which he has rendered to a member of the family. He knocked my cheque-book from my hand, and I very properly chastised his insolence by slapping his face. As the head of the family, it is my duty to protect you from low adventurers. I demand now that you bid him begone!"

"Oh, Boris!" cried the Princess, more in sorrow than in anger; "out of your own mouth I condemn you. If you offered this gentleman money, I am obliged to decide that he did a very spirited and proper thing in knocking your cheque-book from your hand. In the name of the Romanoff family, Mr. Hardy, I ask your pardon for this insult that has been heaped upon you under my roof!"

#### THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA 264

"I will pardon him," replied Hardy, "after he has fought me, according to the custom among gentlemen in this country. He has struck me, and he must give me satisfaction."

"What!" cried the Princess, "a duel? It

is against the law. I will not permit it."

"This Jew, this shopkeeper, wants me to fight

him," sneered Romanoff.
"Your Highness has been pleased to express gratitude for certain services which I have been fortunate enough to render you—to express a hope that you might be able, in fact, to do something for me in return. I now demand a gentleman's satisfaction for this blow. It is all that I will ever ask from the Romanoff family."

"I will also pay you for the blow," snarled

Romanoff.

The Princess glanced indignantly at Romanoff, then turned her eyes searchingly upon Hardy, who stood there, white to the lips, rigid as a statue, looking scornfully at her cousin.

"You must fight him, Boris," she said at last, in a voice low, yet perfectly distinct in the tense

Romanoff bowed gracefully, with an evil smile.

"I will kill him with pleasure, since you desire it." he said.

"My seconds will wait upon you in the morning," said Hardy. "Madame, I am your debtor and grateful servant. I have the honour of wishing you good evening"; and he walked from the room.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

## THE PRINCESS MAKES A STRANGE REQUEST

N the preliminary arrangements for the duel, Lieutenant Gortchakov represented the American with zeal and fidelity. Romanoff's seconds, fully aware of Hardy's reputation for skill with

the pistol, objected to that weapon.

"Why, bless my soul!" exclaimed General Koukolnik, "an exchange of bullets would be nothing less than murder, and none of us, as Russians, could permit that. This American could pink his adversary through the heart or between the eyes, without the least trouble in the world; and his hatred of him is so great that he will certainly do it. We can't permit that—upon my soul we can't!"

We can't permit that—upon my soul we can't!"

"For the time being," replied Gortchakov with firmness, "I shall forget that I am a Russian, and shall demand justice for the man who has asked me to represent him. My man has little or no knowledge of the rapier. A combat á l'outrance with swords would mean just as surely his destruction. He is, moreover, as you well know, the outraged party, and the choice of weapons should be his. Romanoff, moreover, is not unskilful with the pistol, and there is no doubt as to the quality of his nerve."

Fortunately for Gortchakov's contention, the Baron Koubelik, Koukolnik's associate, believed Hardy's reputation for skill greatly exaggerated.

"The fellow is a plebeian, too," he urged, "a

mere tradesman, who will lose his nerve when made to stand up and be shot at. Take my word for it, Koukolnik, his arm will tremble like a dog's tail when you pat it on the head. If it were I, I'd rather shoot him down than dirty my sword on him; and I've no doubt in the world that Romanoff will feel the same. If we insist on the rapier, too, when this American is, as you know, the aggrieved party, we shall be casting a slur upon our man's courage. No Russian nobleman fears any adversary, with any weapon."

By this time Koukolnik had taken so many potations of vodka that the bravado in this sentiment

appealed to him.

"You are right!" he cried, "and pistols it shall be. Prince Romanoff shall shoot this tradesman down, he shall not soil his rapier upon him."

Gortchakov was jubilant over this arrangement, and he hastened to Hardy's quarters in the hotel to tell him of the success of his negotiations.

"All you have to do now," said the dapper young Russian, "is to shoot the great bully through the heart, or between the eyes."

Hardy glanced at Gortchakov's flushed face. He was struck by the eagerness of his manner, and his evident delight at Romanoff's mortal peril.

evident delight at Romanoff's mortal peril.

"Don't wait till he shoots first," counselled the

lieutenant; "for he has a sort of awkward skill with the pistol himself. Take aim and shoot just as you hear the word 'three'! My associate and I will see that you do not get into serious trouble with the law. We will testify to the grossness of the insult. The Princess, too, will stand by you. Whatever her feelings for Romanoff, she is too much of a thoroughbred to see an injustice done, and she has great influence with the Czar."

# THE PRINCESS'S REQUEST

There was a slight break in Gortchakov's voice when he mentioned the name of the Princess, an agitation in his manner that suggested a possible explanation of his hatred of Romanoff. Hardy remembered the old adage, "All is fair in love and war."

• The Princess's beauty was of the sort that breeds murder in the hearts of men.

"If her Highness loves her cousin," he said sadly, "killing him will not make her love him the less, or—or—us the more. She is not the sort of woman who loves twice in a lifetime."

"She does not, she cannot know, what a worthless brute he is!" cried Gortchakov. "If she loves him, it would be saving her from a fate worse than death to kill him. And think of the insult which he heaped upon you. I assure you that you can kill him with perfect safety."

Hardy laid his hand upon the younger man's shoulder.

"A gentleman does not think of the consequences to himself when he is vindicating his honour. I will settle this score with Romanoff with a full realization of all the aggravating circumstances."

Gortchakov seized the American's hand impulsively.

"Pardon me, my friend," he said, "I intended no imputation on your courage; but there are others besides myself who are tired of this great bully, Romanoff!"

"When is the meeting to take place?" asked Hardy.

"To-morrow morning at eight, in a grove on the banks of the river. If you will permit me, I will call for you at half-past seven with my sledge, and will drive you there."

"I shall be deeply indebted to you. And now, if you will take no offence, I shall ask you to excuse me, as I must get a good night's rest. There is no medicine like sleep and plenty of it to make the hand steady and the eye clear."

The young Russian glanced at the other admir-

You have the nerve of a Russian."

"Or of an American?" replied Hardy, smiling. "You will find me ready at seven-thirty, and don't fail to be in time. We must not be one second late at this rendezvous."

Left to himself, Hardy sat for a long time with his

head in his hands, thinking.

Of his ability to kill Romanoff at the distance agreed upon, thirty paces, he had not the slightest doubt. He was also aware that he stood a fair chance himself of being wounded, or of losing his own life. Romanoff enjoyed the reputation of being a good shot, though how much this meant in Russia Hardy had no means of judging. Probably not much according to American standards; but even a poor shot will sometimes hit the mark.

Was the Princess in love with her cousin? more Hardy debated this possibility in his mind, the more it took on the shape of probability. That she had commanded the prince to fight Hardy was no proof against the supposition. She came of fighting blood, and the man she loved must be no coward. Moreover, Hardy had taken advantage of her own princely word to him, and had claimed fulfilment of the promise which she had made to him.

Romanoff was handsome as a god, brave, masterful, impetuous, of high birth: the sort of man, it seemed to Hardy, to appeal to a woman like the Princess.

"And I," he laughed bitterly, "am a merchant here, in her autocratic and aristocratic Russia, a merchant who owes her sufferance of me to the fact that I can shoot straight!"

He said nothing that night to Wang of the impending duel, but the boy seemed aware that some danger threatened his master, or that the latter was gravely troubled about something. Although told several times, kindly, to go to bed, he returned as often, and hovered about Hardy. Indeed, Wang responded to Hardy's moods with that delicacy of understanding sometimes seen in a dog for its master, or a woman for the man she loves.

"Well, Wang," said Hardy, at last, "you may sit up all night if you choose, but I, for one, am going to get some sleep. Good night!" and he retired to his own room.

He began to undress slowly and absent-mindedly, standing for long minutes motionless in the middle of the floor, or dropping into a chair, in deep thought, as though he were confronted by some weighty problem which he could not solve. He turned off the light at last and crept into bed, but he was destined to be again disturbed by Wang, who tapped timidly at the door.

"That boy is becoming a nuisance!" he muttered. "There is such a thing even as too much devotion. Well, Wang!" he shouted sharply.

"If you please," called Wang, "here is a note for you."

Hardy arose, went to the door and took a letter from the boy's hand.

"Wait," he commanded, "till I see if there is an answer." He opened the missive and read:—

" My Friend,

"I have just learned that the duel is to take

## 270 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

place in the morning, and that pistols are the weapons chosen. You know that I gave my consent to this deplorable affair because you asked me in terms that left me no choice. I am going now to beg something of you: it is that you should spare my headstrong and violent cousin's life. He wronged you outrageously, I know, and in the name of the Romanoff family I humbly beg your pardon for that wrong. But should you kill him—and your wonderful skill places his life entirely in your hands—I should feel that his blood is on my head. Will you not grant a distracted woman's prayer and spare his life? Wound him if you will, but oh, do not kill him! By granting this request you will place under still deeper obligations one who already owes you more than she can ever hope to repay.

"ROMANOVA."

As he read, Hardy turned pale to the lips. He tore the note in small bits and dropped them into a waste paper basket.

"Is there any answer, dear master?" called the voice of Wang through the door.

"No," called Hardy; "there is no answer."

#### CHAPTER XL

#### THE DUEL

REDERICK COURTLAND HARDY slept but poorly that night. The typical hero of romance, when about to fight a duel at break of day, goes to bed and sleeps more soundly than ever before in his life. This deep slumber proves his iron nerve more incontestably than any amount of swash-buckling bravado or any number of great oaths could do. But we are not dealing with a typical hero of romance.

Hardy, as he tossed about for hours on the bed, felt genuine disgust at himself that he was unable to go to sleep. He experienced no fear, and he had a feeling that it was irregular for a gentleman to lie awake in such circumstances.

About midnight it occurred to him that it might be a good thing to make a will. Such a document already existed, but he now arose, and, putting on dressing-gown and slippers, went out into the office. Lighting the gas, he wrote the following:—

"Moscow, January 7, 1904.

Being of sound mind and in possession of all my faculties, I write this as a codicil to my will, in the keeping of Andrew Mackey, Esq., attorney-at-law, Boston. I hereby will and bequeath all my ready money, deposited in the Russo-Kitaisky bank of Stretinsk, and amounting to something over six thousand roubles, to my faithful secretary, Wang, and I heartily commend the said Wang to the favourable notice of Frederick Emery, President of

the American Trading Company in Siberia. The boy is faithful, honest, and possesses a degree of business ability quite astonishing in one so young. FREDERICK COURTLAND HARDY."

This he folded and put in an envelope, on which he wrote with a lead pencil, "For Wang." Tossing the envelope upon a table in his sleeping-room, he went back to bed again, and at last succeeded in getting to sleep. He was awakened by Gortchakov pounding upon his door and shouting:-

"Get up, my friend, get up! We shall be late for

the rendezvous!"

Hardy dressed hurriedly and went out to his

second, who was waiting in the office.

"See, I have ordered coffee for you," said the lieutenant, "and here it comes. I took the liberty, because we have no time to lose. Drink a cup of coffee now, and we will be back in an hour, in time for breakfast, after you have killed his Highness!"

The lieutenant was in unusually high spirits over the prospect, and his boyish face beamed genially. Hardy sighed as he gulped down his steaming coffee. Gortchakov wanted Romanoff out of the way that his own chances with the Princess might be improved, but it never for a moment occurred to him to take the American into consideration. A Princess and a tradesman! The very idea was absurd.

Hardy had struggled into his overcoat.

"Well, I am ready," he said. "Let's be going, and have this business over."

As they passed out they met Wang, who glanced anxiously at his master.

" I am going to take an early ride with the lieutenant,"he explained. "It—it's a fine morning for riding, Wang." But he added in a low tone to Gortchakov: "If anything should happen to me, let that boy know immediately. He is devoted to me. In case the worst should happen, there is a paper on the table in my bedroom, leaving him a small sum of money. I have had no time to have it attested, but you can bear witness that I told you that the thing was genuine."

The lieutenant's sledge and beautiful team of

thoroughbreds were waiting at the curb.
"Jump in, pray," he said "and let's be off. And we mustn't talk about anything happening. There is nothing going to happen except that you will shoot a great rascal and bully through the heart, and we will come back to a hearty breakfast, having done a good morning's work with very little waste of time.

Gortchakov had now fixed upon Romanoff's heart as the most pleasing receptacle for Hardy's bullet.

The coachman cracked his long whip, and the high-strung, nervous steeds gave a great bound and went scurrying through the early streets of the Muscovite capital. In half an hour they had reached their destination, a thick wood on the banks of the Moskva. Hardy's other second was already on the spot with a surgeon, a fat little man wrapped deep in furs, who walked briskly to and fro in the snow, carrying a case of instruments.

"You are in good time, gentlemen," cried Gortchakov, consulting his watch: "there are still ten

minutes to spare.

"I think I hear sleigh bells now," said the surgeon. "I hope it is Romanoff, so that I can get back to my warm bed. Why the devil people want to come out in such weather as this is more than I can understand. Let them shoot each other and be

d—d, if they want to, but not at this hour and in such weather."

"We will try to be expeditious," said Hardy, cheerfully, "and in the meantime, I beg pardon for my share in the inconvenience to which we are putting you. You're right about the sleigh bells. Here are our friends now."

Through a vista between the leafless trees a sledge could be seen approaching, drawn by three horses, running like mad. The driver rose to his feet and settled back upon the seat, bringing them to a rearing, pawing, sudden halt.

"Your servants, gentlemen," said Koukolnik, lifting his hat. "We trust we have not kept you

waiting."

"And yours" replied Gortchakov, returning them salutation, in which the others joined. "You are just on the minute, if my watch is right."

"You are fast," said Koukolnik, climbing laboriously from the sledge, his timepiece in his hand.

"We are five minutes ahead."

"I will wager you a hundred roubles I am right," insisted Gortchakov, with the Russian's ever-present mania for gambling.

"Done!" said Koukolnik, "the wager to be decided by the regulator in Vahtek's jewellery store."

"Agreed!" replied Gortchakov, "and now let's to business."

The details were soon arranged and the ground measured off. Hardy did not pay any attention to these preliminaries, but walked briskly backwards and forwards to keep his feet warm, glancing occasionally at Romanoff, who stood leaning against a tree, his hands in his ulster pockets, an insolent, careless smile on his handsome face. He certainly was a splendid specimen of manhood, thought the

American, and if he felt the least tremor of fear he knew how to disguise it. Did it seem at all unlikely that a high-bred, autocratic woman, the daughter of a hundred warriors, should have fallen in love with a man like that?

"It is time now, my friend," said Gortchakov, coming up to Hardy. "I must trouble you to remove your coat. But you will not catch cold, for it will only take you a minute. Upon my word, I admire your nerve. You ought to have been a Russian. You will shoot him at the word three!"

Hardy removed his ulster and faced his opponent. A long duelling pistol of excellent make and perfect

precision was placed in his hand.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" asked Koukolnik.
"I will count three slowly. You will raise your weapons and take aim when I commence, and will fire at the word 'three'!"

As the words were being uttered, Hardy fixed his eye-glasses more firmly upon his nose, the while he examined the distance and the person of his antagonist with a cool, practised glance.

Koukolnik began:--

"Odeen!"

The two weapons were raised and pointed.

" Dvah!"

It could not be seen that the hand of either man trembled in the slightest.

" Tra!"

Two shots rang out almost simultaneously.

Neither man fell.

"Hell and furies!" cried Romanoff, throwing his pistol to the earth, "I have missed him. This weapon is worthless. I demand another shot."

"Very well," replied Hardy quietly, "but if we shoot again I shall kill you. I beg that you will

inform his Highness of my intentions, at the same time conveying to him the assurance of my most distinguished consideration."

"You have missed," whispered Gortchakov petulantly. "Why did you do this? You're as cool this minute as I am. Are you sure you have

not wounded him?"

"My principal demands another shot," said Koukolnik, advancing. "He presents his compliments to Mr. Hardy, and suggests that he has not done justice to his great reputation for skill. Perhaps he will get better control of his nerves, now that he has escaped danger once, and his hand will not tremble so much as it evidently has done this time."

"Tell the prince for me that if we shoot again I shall do myself the honour of lodging a ball exactly midway between his eyes." Koukolnik started for the prince with this message. He had not travelled over half the distance when Hardy said:—

"I am faint, lieutenant. Let me lean on you for

a moment."

"My God, you are wounded!" cried Gortchakov, putting his arm about the American's waist; and indeed a dark stain, rapidly spreading, dyed his waistcoat and shirt front.

"I-I am slightly wounded," gasped Hardy, and

fainted away.

"What's the matter there with your man?" sneered Romanoff. "He seems to be slightly weary. I thought I must have hit him. How is it, surgeon? Have I done his business for him?"

"He is seriously wounded, I fear," replied the surgeon. "Get his coat about him. Here, lift him into the sledge. Let me get in with you. Now, drive like mad, drive, I say!"

## CHAPTER XLI

#### THE GOLD CUFF BUTTON

BY the surgeon's orders, Gortchakov drove directly to the hospital, where Hardy was laid upon a bed and his wound examined and dressed. The prince's bullet had passed through the flesh beneath the shoulder, making a clean perforation, a painful, but not dangerous wound. Hardy revived in the sledge, and to Gortchakov's petulant demand why he had shot so badly, made no reply other than:-

"The best intentioned bullets sometimes go astray. I turn him over to you, lieutenant; I have not deprived you of the pleasure of killing him

yourself!"

His coat and shirt were cut away from his chest at the hospital, and a young grub of an intern assisted the surgeon in washing the wound and passing a silk handkerchief through it; an operation which caused the patient to bite his nether lip till

it bled, but did not draw a groan from him.

"You will be all right in about a month," said the surgeon, on taking his leave, "but I beg you, if you think of fighting again, either postpone your little affair till the spring breezes begin to blow, or don't call upon me to assist. I shall have chilblains as a result of your foolishness that may cause me more suffering than your nasty little puncture!"

Gortchakov departed in a surly humour, evi-

dently annoyed because his principal had failed to remove the lieutenant's chief rival, as he supposed, to another sphere, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage.

Hardy was left alone with a large-boned, florid nurse of peasant type and the young grub of an intern, who was disposed to be inquisitive as to the

cause of the wound.

He disposed of the intern by pretending that he desired to sleep, and then sent the nurse to telephone for Wang.

The boy arrived about noon.

"What has happened, my dear master?" he sobbed, sinking upon his knees beside the cot and taking one of Hardy's hands in both his own. "Are you wounded? Have you been attacked? Have you met with an accident? Tell me, I beg of you! You do not know how I have suffered with fear and anxiety, as I felt that you were about to encounter some terrible danger. And you left me this—this—" producing the will and tearing it into bits, " to increase my anxiety. Did you think that money could have compensated me for your loss? Oh, it was cruel of you—cruel!"

"Will you be kind enough to leave us alone?" said Hardy to the nurse. "This is my secretary, and I have some communications of a private

nature to make to him."

"But the doctor said that you were not to be left alone, and that you were not to talk," objected the nurse, who was, like the intern, consumed with curiosity.

"Go, I say!" commanded Hardy, his pain causing him to give way to the anger which this meddlesome persistence aroused in him. "Or, here! In my coat there—or in the ruins of it, you

will find a pocket book. Take from it a ten-rouble note. No, in the other pocket. That's it. There! I will give you the ten roubles if you will go out into the hall immediately, and not come back till I send for you. I—I am not in the mood to enjoy feminine society, now, however charming," he added whimsically. "If you respond to my wishes during the time that I have the pleasure of being with you, I will see that you are liberally rewarded. Do you comprehend?"

"Da, da, da!" replied the girl with quick

understanding, and glided from the room.
""There!" said Hardy kindly, touched by the boy's concern. "Get up and sit in that chair. Bring it here by the side of the bed, and I'll tell you all about it. Here, in this twentieth century, I, an American, Frederick Courtland Hardy, of Boston, Mass., have fought a duel and, I suspect, about a

woman!"

"A-a woman?" stammered Wang, turning

pale.

"As nearly as I can find out. I was calling on the Princess Romanova, paying her my respects, when in came her cousin, the Prince Romanoff and insulted me so grossly that I deemed it my duty to demand satisfaction of him. I strongly suspect that his Highness's antipathy to me is rooted chiefly in the fact that I on one occasion saved the life of his cousin. He struck me in the face, Wang."

As the American said these words his own counten-

ance flushed with shame.

"He struck you!" cried the Corean, "I could spit on his corpse. I could spurn it with my foot!"

"I have no doubt you could, thereby displaying your devotion to my unworthy self. Your plan is impracticable, however, for the simple reason that

there is no corpse. Romanoff is alive and well at the present moment, and is no doubt gloating over my discomfiture."

"He is not even wounded?" asked the boy.

"Not even wounded."

"But why did you not kill him when you had the opportunity? It surely would not have been difficult to hit that great bulk of flesh. Is it then safe to strike an American gentleman in the face?"

"N—o, not always. My reasons for not killing him are too complicated for a boy to understand. They involve a lady's sanction of a duel, and then her subsequent nullification of that sanction. They involve, in general, a lady's request, which can hardly be overlooked when she is, in reality, the cause of the hatred which made the meeting necessary. Do you follow me. Wang?"

you follow me, Wang?"

"I—I think I do," replied the boy wearily.
"You spared him because the Princess asked you to. You have been magnanimous, whatever the cost to yourself, and given the Princess her admirer, for whom, in his moment of extreme peril, she found that she cared more than she had supposed! And now you are done with the whole Romanoff family!"

Hardy forgot his pain for the moment, and stared

at the boy in open-mouthed wonderment.

"If you were not a boy," he said, at last, sinking back upon the pillow, "I should think you were a woman. Your intuition in such matters is positively marvellous. And now I mustn't talk too much, for it makes this shoulder ache like a bad tooth. I must get well, and we must go back to Stretinsk and the store. But there is one little thing that I want you to do for me. Go to the place where the duel was fought this morning. I will describe the location exactly to you. Ro-

manofi stood near a large oak tree whose trunk divides about six feet from the ground, into two trunks, identical in size. Look about there and see if you can find in the snow a gold cuff button. It is there, and shining against the white, should be easily found. Bring it to me as quickly as possible."

"But, my dear master, I want to stay and nurse you—care for you! Who should do this but me? I—you don't know what a good nurse I am. You

have no idea!"

"I don't doubt it in the least, Wang. But if you desire to please me, you will bring me that cuff button. Go, now; I am in too much pain to bear opposition meekly. Listen now. This is where the meeting took place."

Hardy described the locality in a few clear sen-

tences.

"Take a sledge and drive there. You should not be gone over an hour."

Wang departed without another word.

Not long after the boy's departure the nurse brought in a bouquet of priceless orchids, which she arranged in a vase as she set them on a table near his bed.

"An isvoschik brought them," she explained to Hardy. "Here is the note that came with them."

She handed him a tiny billetdeux and raised one of the shades. Holding the note in his teeth, he opened the envelope with his good hand, and read:—

"MY FRIEND,—I do not know what your feelings are toward my unhappy self. I had no idea that this deplorable affair would end as it has. Will you allow me to come in person and express my

regret, and do whatever lies in my power to alleviate your sufferings? Thank God you are not killed! "ELIZABETHA ROMANOVA."

"Tell the man that there is no answer at present," said Hardy to the nurse.

Wang was gone two hours. When he arrived he came straight to Hardy's couch and handed him a small gold object, with a bit of white linen hanging to it.

"Here it is," he said, "it is stamped with the crest of the Romanoff family. I thought that you had lost one of your own cuff buttons."

"Bring paper and envelopes," Hardy requested of the nurse, "and then leave us alone for a few moments."

The woman complied.

"Now take my indelible pen from my waistcoat pocket and write."

Wang sat down at the table and looked inquiringly at his master.

"Your Highness," dictated Hardy, "I hope that you will not give yourself the slightest uneasiness on my account. My wound is a very trifling matter, from which I shall soon recover. I am greatly honoured by your kind offer to call and see me, but I must deny myself the pleasure of receiving you. I cannot allow you to compromise your exalted position by thus yielding to the dictates of your good heart. Will you allow me to add that I feel that I have already trespassed too far upon your good nature and am quite unwilling to continue the infliction? As you have quite frequently admired my skill with the pistol, I am enclosing a little trophy of the same—his Highness'

cuff button, which I hope will convince you that I have not disappointed your expectations. Will you kindly hand it to him with my compliments. Wishing you all happiness in the years to come, I remain,

"Your humble servant,
"Frederick Courtland Hardy."

Wang laughed—a queer, hard little laugh, of mingled exultation and hate. Without waiting for any further directions from his master, he put the cuff button in the envelope with the note, sealed it and directed it to the Princess Romanova.

"You will take that to the Princess's palace," directed Hardy, "and give it into her Highness's own hands."

### CHAPTER XLII

### ROMANOFF IS MURDERED

HARDY was able to leave the hospital on February the first new state. ruary the first, new style, and return to his own quarters at the hotel, where he was much more comfortable, for the hospitals of Moscow are inferior to those of other European cities of equal size. He was pale and weak, but his appetite was good, and he was gaining strength rapidly. Though he had come off second best in the duel, to all appearances, yet his countenance had taken on a look not in any way characteristic of the man who has been beaten or cowed by punishment. There was something new in his eyes and the expression about his mouth which suggested rather the man who has fought a mental fight and won. In his conversations with Wang he avoided all mention either of the Princess or of her cousin. His only desire was to close the business in Moscow and get back to Stretinsk as soon as possible, get back to the warehouses and the great water highway that led eastward to the Pacific Ocean, to that frontier of the vast Russian Empire that lay close to Corea and scowled across the Japan sea at Nippon and its hive of angry, buzzing bees. In the preparations for departure the Corean boy displayed a competency and assiduity that were a revelation even to Hardy. He superintended the shipment to Stretinsk of large orders for goods, he made valuable suggestions,

he worked till all hours of the night, relieving his principal of the labour of correspondence and bookkeeping. In addition he was a cheerful and even amusing companion, whose brain was fertile with delicate little attentions that made Hardy's enforced detention in the hotel less irksome.

Meanwhile letters from Emery and other advices were insistent to the effect that war was inevitable.

In Moscow, however, there was a general feeling that the conflict would be long delayed, if, indeed, it ever took place. Hardy took this view of the matter, in discussing it one day with his secretary.

"You see, Wang," he said, "Russia has the situation entirely in her keeping. Japan will hardly dare to attack this vast, colossal power, and Russia will simply wear her out by evasive, unproductive diplomacy."

"Wait and see," cried Wang; "wait and see whether Japan will attack or not! Japan is a compact, sinewy body, trained to exquisite skill, with but one thought, one purpose. Russia is a great, unwieldy, conglomerate hulk, torn with dissensions. She is a house of cards, the temple of the Philistines which Japan will tumble down, though this Sampson is neither blind, nor will he perish in the ruins."

"Are all Coreans as great Japanese sympathizers as you are?" asked Hardy. "One would think from what he sees in the papers here and from what he hears, that Corea desires the protection of Russia."

Wang laughed.

"The Japanese and the Coreans are cousins," he replied, "first cousins, and they understand each other. Japan will awaken the yellow races from the slumber of centuries and will lead them in the vanguard of civilization. With this awakening will come also a knowledge of power and rights. Do you know that China is now filled with emissaries of the Japanese government—missionaries—teaching the authorities and the people the plans of Russia and of the other white races, and giving them a knowledge of their own strength if they are properly armed and disciplined and of the weakness of their enemies? If Japan needs China she will call upon her. But she will not need her. I tell you that a hundred thousand Japanese troops can make their way from Vladivostok to Petersburg and lay the capital of the Czar in ruins!"

"Whew!" exclaimed Hardy, "this is indeed the other side of the question. I had no idea that you—you Asiatics were so confident as all that. You forget the great Napoleon and his expedition

to Moscow!"

On the morning of the seventh Wang came into the office and laid a paper down before Hardy, pointing without a word, to a double-leaded article with a "scare" head.

# "JAPAN IN A PET.

"Her Minister leaves Petersburg.

"The Mikado, in a fit of rage, withdraws Count Kurino from the Russian capital—Peppery yellow people unable to conduct civilized diplomatic negotiations—The Czar's calm and dignified course."

Hardy glanced through the article, which set forth at length the Russian government's reasonable and righteous course, as alleged by the writer, and the hot-headed, childish, and unwarrantable demands of the islanders.

"Well," he commented, "even this does not

mean war. Russia will simply wait—she has always been waiting, and the Japanese must strike the first blow, if they want war."

"Wait and see," was Wang's only reply.

It was only two days later that Hardy became aware that something extraordinary had happened. Towards evening the city was seized with excitement. Some great, some terrible news was in the air. Men were talking excitedly in the corridors of the hotel, groups were gathering in the streets, hoarsely shouting. Wang was out, so Hardy rang for a bell boy and asked him what was the matter.

"Matter," cried the boy, "the Japanese have captured Port Arthur! They have murdered a hundred thousand Christians. They have sunk the whole Russian fleet, treacherously, falsely, in the night. The Czar will send a great army and kill every cursed Japanese on earth. I am going, Ivan Nekrassov is going—we are all going. Curse the Japanese!"

"My God!" exclaimed Hardy, as the excited boy left, slamming the door, "they are at it, in earnest, and the Japanese have struck hard. This means war, indeed. If the Russian navy has been destroyed it means a long war. Wang will be

wild."

At this moment the Corean entered, but, to Hardy's surprise, he was not carried away by excitement. There was a hectic spot on each yellow cheek, and his eyes were burning, but he was self-contained.

"Well, Wang," said Hardy, "you were right, after all, and the Japanese have attacked. I have heard some very wild rumours. Have you learned anything definite?"

"Yes," replied Wang, "what seem to be reliable

reports have arrived. The Mikado's fleet last night attacked the Russian ships at Port Arthur and sunk the Czarevitch and the Retvizan, two of the heaviest battleships in the Czar's navy, and the Pallada, a cruiser. The Russians are very indignant, naturally, but they should save their feelings. The Japanese have only begun."

Within two weeks after the breaking out of the war, during which time a series of disastrous blows were struck at the naval prestige of Russia, Hardy was ready for the long railway journey back to

Stretinsk.

The American was considerably emaciated, and not yet entirely recovered from the effects of his wound, but he believed himself able to travel, especially under such favourable conditions as those offered by a compartment in the train luxus, and he was impatient to get out to Moscow.

Perhaps, having definitely and resolutely put the Princess Romanova out of his life, he felt that it would be easier to forget her if he went where there would be no danger of seeing her again. Of one thing he was certain: that he wanted work, money, power. Despite the fact that he knew himself to be a gentleman, according to the standards of the race from which he sprung, he was now in Russia, where the Princess belonged to one class and he to another, and her sympathies were with her own people, as his experience in the late encounter with Romanoff had shown him.

He had figured as a knight errant long enough. He was a tradesman; that was the calling which had brought him to this country, and it was time for him to be about his business.

Wang having secured a first-class compartment for his master and second-class accommodation for himself, the two drove to the great terminal station, whose commodious building they found crowded with officers of every rank, military officials, and red-cross nurses hastening to Vladivostok and the front.

Among these Hardy noticed the gallant, towering form of Boris Romanoff, attired in officer's cap and cloak. The Prince was surrounded by a group of officers, with whom he was talking. He noticed Hardy and gave him a look of hate. The American turned his eyes quickly away and busied himself with identifying his baggage and getting it aboard.

On the morning of the third day out from Moscow the prince was found murdered in his compartment. He was lying peacefully sleeping in his berth, the last long sleep, with a slender stiletto sticking in his heart.

# CHAPTER XLIII

# ON A CHARGE OF MURDER

THIS tragic occurrence occasioned tremendous excitement on the train luxus, which was stopped at the next station and surrounded by a band of Cossacks. Here it was kept for three days until a squad of police detectives could be hurried to the scene from Moscow. Numerous arrests were made and many of the passengers questioned separately.

Wang was one of those examined. He was taken into a small, bare room on the second floor of the station, where sat a shrewd old man at a pine table. He was flanked by two younger officers, while a stenographer, stylographic pen in hand, bent over

a writing pad.

"Your name is Wang?" said the officer.

" It is."

"Wang what?"
"Just Wang."

"What is your nationality?"

"I am a Corean."

"You are in the employ of the alleged American, Frederick Courtland Hardy?"

"I am in the employ of the American, Frederick

Courtland Hardy."

"Be careful, sir, do not be insolent. Do not attempt to amend the expressions of the court.

Make a note there: 'Witness very intelligent and inclined to be insolent---' Got it down? Very well. How do you know that he is an American?"

"Because he says he is."

"Oh, ah! Very well. Tell us what you know of the duel which was fought on January 8 between this alleged American, Hardy, and his Highness, the Prince Boris Romanoff. Speak the truth, or it will be the worse for you!"

"I know nothing of the duel which your Honour alludes to as having taken place!" replied Wang. The boy showed not the slightest sign of fear. His yellow face was flushed, he held his head high, and

looked the judge defiantly in the eyes.

"You know nothing of it?" roared the latter. "Do not attempt to deceive the court. We know more than you think. Did not this Hardy tell you that he had fought a duel with his Highness?"

"He told me also that he was an American," replied Wang, "and since your Honour intimates that his word is unreliable——"

"Make another note: 'Witness insolent'——Did he or did he not tell you that such a duel had been fought?"

"He did."

"Ah! He did. That he was seriously wounded in that duel as a result of his Highness's superior coolness and markmanship, we know. We also are acquainted with the causes of said duel; that his Highness was obliged to chastise this Hardy for presumption and insolence; and that it was in accordance with the request of the Princess, his cousin, that his Highness shot him. All this we know. You must tell us what threats of vengeance the wounded man breathed out against the prince." "None at all, your Honour-absolutely none

at all," replied Wang, turning pale, as he saw the

drift of the question!

"None at all! But this is incredible. We shall find means of making you speak the truth. Repeat now those threats to us, and be careful that

you conceal nothing."

"He not only uttered no such threats," said Wang, "but he even spared the worthless life of the prince, when he might have shot him dead. This he did out of regard for the Princess, as he is a very knightly and perfect gentleman. He shot off the Romanoff's cuff button, which he sent to her as proof of his wonderful skill and of how he employed it on that occasion."

"A pretty story this!" laughed the judge.

"Do you not think so, gentlemen?"

Both gentlemen thought exactly as did their chief. "I myself," insisted Wang, "went to the place of meeting, at Mr. Hardy's request and picked up the cuff button, which I gave into the Princess's own hand, who will, I have no doubt, corroborate my statement."

The judge looked sharply at Wang for several

moments, who returned the stare defiantly.

"Lock the witness up again," commanded the

judge, and the order was obeyed.

Wang was kept in close confinement for four days, at the end of which time he was released and informed that nothing further was required of him by the police, who doubtless found him an unsatisfactory witness. He found himself standing alone upon the platform of a small railway station, facing the desolate, snow-covered plain. In the distance was a miserable peasant village, with thatched roofs. The train luxus, the police, all the passengers, the mortal remains of the murdered

prince, were gone. The boy asked a stolid-faced station master what had become of his employer, but the latter only shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

Wang entered the station, sat down upon a bench, and thought for a long time. Then he came out upon the platform and walked up and down for an hour—for two hours, after which he entered the station and passed another hour upon the bench. Though he had not eaten since noon, he did not feel hunger. Towards midnight a man entered the ticket office, pushed open the window, and lit a light. Wang stepped up to the window.

"Do you expect a train?" he asked.

"Yes, in half an hour."

"Going which way?"

"To Moscow."

"How much is the fare?"

The agent told him, and the boy found that he had enough money with him to pay for a third-class ticket and a few roubles over, sufficient to buy food. He procured a ticket, and when the train thundered up to the station he boarded it and soon was speeding back to the Muscovite capital. Arriving there after two days and three nights of agonizing suspense, during which the ponderous train seemed to him to crawl like a giant caterpillar over the vast stretches of virgin white, he arrived again at the great station and hastened immediately to the Gosteenneetsa Russia.

The clerk recognized him, and from the clerk Wang learned that his employer had been taken to St. Petersburg and there lodged in prison, charged with the murder of Boris Romanoff.

"The proof against him is clear," vouchsafed the self-important and voluble clerk," and I am

# CHAPTER XLII

### ROMANOFF IS MURDERED

HARDY was able to leave the hospital on February the first the fir ruary the first, new style, and return to his own quarters at the hotel, where he was much more comfortable, for the hospitals of Moscow are inferior to those of other European cities of equal size. He was pale and weak, but his appetite was good, and he was gaining strength rapidly. Though he had come off second best in the duel, to all appearances, yet his countenance had taken on a look not in any way characteristic of the man who has been beaten or cowed by punishment. There was something new in his eyes and the expression about his mouth which suggested rather the man who has fought a mental fight and won. In his conversations with Wang he avoided all mention either of the Princess or of her cousin. His only desire was to close the business in Moscow and get back to Stretinsk as soon as possible, get back to the warehouses and the great water highway that led eastward to the Pacific Ocean, to that frontier of the vast Russian Empire that lay close to Corea and scowled across the Japan sea at Nippon and its hive of angry, buzzing bees. In the preparations for departure the Corean boy displayed a competency and assiduity that were a revelation even to Hardy. He superintended the shipment to Stretinsk of large orders for goods, he made valuable suggestions,

# CHAPTER XLIV

#### THE BOY AND THE PRINCESS

THE Princess Romanova received Wang in a small library on the second floor. She was walking to and fro with her hands clasped behind her back, and her lovely brows knit in thought, the while she dictated letters to her secretary. The boy's keen glance detected that she was pale. As he entered and stood by the door, silently awaiting, she turned to him eagerly and said:—

"Well! What is this communication that you have to make to me? Do you bring me a letter?"

"I must see you alone," replied Wang. There was something in his manner and expression that could not be denied. The Princess turned toward her secretary, saying:—

"You may leave the room until I ring for you,

Olga."

"But surely," protested Olga, "your Highness does not wish to be left alone with this stranger? Let me stay, I beg of you, to protect you!"

Romanova smiled.

"I fear you would be of small protection in case of danger. Besides," glancing at the boy's slight form, "this young man does not look like a dangerous person. Go, I insist!"

The girl gathered up her papers and left the room.

"Do you know where my master is?" demanded Wang, in perfect Russian.

"Your master?"

"Yes, or my employer, if you will, though I love

ing will come also a knowledge of power and rights. Do you know that China is now filled with emissaries of the Japanese government—missionaries—teaching the authorities and the people the plans of Russia and of the other white races, and giving them a knowledge of their own strength if they are properly armed and disciplined and of the weakness of their enemies? If Japan needs China she will call upon her. But she will not need her. I tell you that a hundred thousand Japanese troops can make their way from Vladivostok to Petersburg and lay the capital of the Czar in ruins!"

"Whew!" exclaimed Hardy, "this is indeed the other side of the question. I had no idea that you—you Asiatics were so confident as all that. You forget the great Napoleon and his expedition

to Moscow!"

On the morning of the seventh Wang came into the office and laid a paper down before Hardy, pointing without a word, to a double-leaded article with a "scare" head.

# "JAPAN IN A PET.

"Her Minister leaves Petersburg.

"The Mikado, in a fit of rage, withdraws Count Kurino from the Russian capital—Peppery yellow people unable to conduct civilized diplomatic negotiations—The Czar's calm and dignified course."

Hardy glanced through the article, which set forth at length the Russian government's reasonable and righteous course, as alleged by the writer, and the hot-headed, childish, and unwarrantable demands of the islanders.

"Well," he commented, "even this does not

mean war. Russia will simply wait—she has always been waiting, and the Japanese must strike the first blow, if they want war."

"Wait and see," was Wang's only reply.

It was only two days later that Hardy became aware that something extraordinary had happened. Towards evening the city was seized with excitement. Some great, some terrible news was in the air. Men were talking excitedly in the corridors of the hotel, groups were gathering in the streets, hoarsely shouting. Wang was out, so Hardy rang for a bell boy and asked him what was the matter.

"Matter," cried the boy, "the Japanese have captured Port Arthur! They have murdered a hundred thousand Christians. They have sunk the whole Russian fleet, treacherously, falsely, in the night. The Czar will send a great army and kill every cursed Japanese on earth. I am going, Ivan Nekrassov is going—we are all going. Curse the Japanese!"

"My God!" exclaimed Hardy, as the excited boy left, slamming the door, "they are at it, in earnest, and the Japanese have struck hard. This means war, indeed. If the Russian navy has been destroyed it means a long war. Wang will be

wild."

At this moment the Corean entered, but, to Hardy's surprise, he was not carried away by excitement. There was a hectic spot on each yellow cheek, and his eyes were burning, but he was self-contained.

"Well, Wang," said Hardy, "you were right, after all, and the Japanese have attacked. I have heard some very wild rumours. Have you learned anything definite?"

"Yes," replied Wang, "what seem to be reliable

reports have arrived. The Mikado's fleet last night attacked the Russian ships at Port Arthur and sunk the Czarevitch and the Retvizan, two of the heaviest battleships in the Czar's navy, and the Pallada, a cruiser. The Russians are very indignant, naturally, but they should save their feelings. The Japanese have only begun."

Within two weeks after the breaking out of the war, during which time a series of disastrous blows were struck at the naval prestige of Russia, Hardy was ready for the long railway journey back to

Stretinsk.

The American was considerably emaciated, and not yet entirely recovered from the effects of his wound, but he believed himself able to travel, especially under such favourable conditions as those offered by a compartment in the train luxus, and he was impatient to get out to Moscow.

Perhaps, having definitely and resolutely put the Princess Romanova out of his life, he felt that it would be easier to forget her if he went where there would be no danger of seeing her again. Of one thing he was certain: that he wanted work, money, power. Despite the fact that he knew himself to be a gentleman, according to the standards of the race from which he sprung, he was now in Russia, where the Princess belonged to one class and he to another, and her sympathies were with her own people, as his experience in the late encounter with Romanoff had shown him.

He had figured as a knight errant long enough. He was a tradesman; that was the calling which had brought him to this country, and it was time for him to be about his business.

Wang having secured a first-class compartment for his master and second-class accommodation for himself, the two drove to the great terminal station, whose commodious building they found crowded with officers of every rank, military officials, and red-cross nurses hastening to Vladivostok and the front.

Among these Hardy noticed the gallant, towering form of Boris Romanoff, attired in officer's cap and cloak. The Prince was surrounded by a group of officers, with whom he was talking. He noticed Hardy and gave him a look of hate. The American turned his eyes quickly away and busied himself with identifying his baggage and getting it aboard.

On the morning of the third day out from Moscow the prince was found murdered in his compartment. He was lying peacefully sleeping in his berth, the last long sleep, with a slender stiletto sticking in his heart.

# CHAPTER XLIII

### ON A CHARGE OF MURDER

THIS tragic occurrence occasioned tremendous excitement on the train luxus, which was stopped at the next station and surrounded by a band of Cossacks. Here it was kept for three days until a squad of police detectives could be hurried to the scene from Moscow. Numerous arrests were made and many of the passengers questioned separately.

Wang was one of those examined. He was taken into a small, bare room on the second floor of the station, where sat a shrewd old man at a pine table. He was flanked by two younger officers, while a stenographer, stylographic pen in hand, bent over

a writing pad.

"Your name is Wang?" said the officer.

" It is."

"Wang what?"

" Just Wang."

"What is your nationality?"

"I am a Corean."

"You are in the employ of the alleged American, Frederick Courtland Hardy?"

"I am in the employ of the American, Frederick

Courtland Hardy."

"Be careful, sir, do not be insolent. Do not attempt to amend the expressions of the court.

Make a note there: 'Witness very intelligent and inclined to be insolent——' Got it down? Very well. How do you know that he is an American?"

"Because he says he is."

"Oh, ah! Very well. Tell us what you know of the duel which was fought on January 8 between this alleged American, Hardy, and his Highness, the Prince Boris Romanoff. Speak the truth, or it will be the worse for you!"

"I know nothing of the duel which your Honour alludes to as having taken place!" replied Wang. The boy showed not the slightest sign of fear. His yellow face was flushed, he held his head high, and

looked the judge defiantly in the eyes.

"You know nothing of it?" roared the latter. "Do not attempt to deceive the court. We know more than you think. Did not this Hardy tell you that he had fought a duel with his Highness?"

"He told me also that he was an American," replied Wang, "and since your Honour intimates

that his word is unreliable-"

"Make another note: 'Witness insolent'——Did he or did he not tell you that such a duel had been fought?"

"He did."

"Ah! He did. That he was seriously wounded in that duel as a result of his Highness's superior coolness and markmanship, we know. We also are acquainted with the causes of said duel; that his Highness was obliged to chastise this Hardy for presumption and insolence; and that it was in accordance with the request of the Princess, his cousin, that his Highness shot him. All this we know. You must tell us what threats of vengeance the wounded man breathed out against the prince."

"None at all, your Honour—absolutely none

She sat down upon the divan, at some little distance from him, and turned her eyes upon him, awaiting for him to speak.

"You have our permission to proceed," he said.

"I come, sire," she began, "to speak to you of my cousin, Boris Romanoff's death, and to tell you something of the man who is accused of his murder—the American, Frederick Courtland Hardy,"

"You have our deepest sympathy in this matter, my daughter," said his Majesty. "I understand from the Minister of Justice that you loved your cousin

—that you were engaged to him."
The Princess remained silent.

"It is sad," continued his Majesty, "very sad, but be assured that, although the case is a somewhat difficult one, full justice shall be done. The American minister has already inquired about the matter, and has demanded that the fullest investigation be made. These Americans are very meddlesome. I am informed, however, by the Minister of Foreign Affairs that there will be little difficulty in establishing this Hardy's guilt, as he is a dangerous

The Princess turned pale, and she repeated:-

"A dangerous character? A bad record? Will you send for this record, sire, that I may hear it in your Majesty's presence? For I come not to speak against this Hardy, who is accused of murdering my cousin, but to plead for his release, to pray that justice may be done!"

"You—to plead for him!"

character and has a bad record."

"Yes, sire, for he did not kill my cousin. Will your Majesty grant me this favour, that I may hear this record read in your Majesty's presence? For I know this Mr. Hardy, and I know much that is good of him, and nothing bad!"

The Czar rang a bell and commanded a servant to send a confidential secretary to him. Five minutes later an old man entered; a bowed old man, with a clean-shaven face, whose eyes denoted infinite shrewdness, his manner infinite servility.

"Pypine," said his Majesty, "can you bring to us immediately the record of the American, Hardy, concerning whom the Minister of Foreign Affairs

was speaking to us the other day?"
"Yes, sire," replied Pypine. "A copy was ordered from the chief of police of Moscow, and is now in his Excellency's possession."

"Bring it," said the Czar, "immediately."

Pypine disappeared.

"While he is gone, you may tell us what you know of this American, Hardy, and why you think he

did not assassinate your cousin."

" I know that he is gentleman of high connections in his own country, who has come here to engage in commerce and retrieve his fortunes. My cousin first met him in Japan. This part of the story I have from Boris' own lips. Boris, being hardpressed by the police, put his tell-tale papers in Mr. Hardy's overcoat pocket and tried to throw the guilt upon him. The plan did not succeed, and Boris suffered many hardships, for which he unjustly blamed Mr. Hardy. I first met him on the Amur river, where I was captured by Chinese brigands. He came to the rescue and saved me from a horrible fate. This still further enraged my cousin, who loved me and was jealous of any one who served me in any way. He was very brave, was Boris, and would have saved me himself, but he was not there—which certainly was not Mr. Hardy's fault. On the Amur again, we were attacked by brigands, and Mr. Hardy, as well as my cousin, fought like a brave

In my house in Moscow, my cousin, who was of a violent nature, insulted the American by offering him money, and when Mr. Hardy indignantly refused and knocked his cheque-book out of his hand, struck him in the face. A duel was fought, at which Mr. Hardy, at my request, spared my cousin's life, though he was himself quite severely wounded. He has wonderful skill with the pistol, and he shot a cuff button from my cousin's sleeve, which he sent me as proof that he had complied with my request. My cousin was boastful of having wounded Mr. Hardy, and I gave him the cuff button and told him its He became transported with rage, and swore that he would not rest till he had rid the earth of this man. He conceived it his duty to avenge the outraged honour of the Romanoff family, as he expressed it. He thought he must kill this man for other reasons-" Here the Princess halted and blushed.

"Go on," said the Czar kindly, and much interested. "This is a most remarkable story! In it this

Mr. Hardy appears as a hero!"

"Sire, in Mr. Hardy's employ was a young Corean boy, whose devotion to his master surpassed anything that I have ever before heard of. It was more like that of a woman for the man whom she loves, when a woman really loves. This—boy—I am ashamed to tell it, sire; but now your Majesty will understand why I have wished to confide in you alone—this boy heard my cousin plotting to kill Mr. Hardy. Your Majesty will understand that my cousin was no longer a sane man; that rage and —and—jealousy, perhaps, had rendered him for the moment irresponsible. The boy, fearing for his master's safety, and believing that a Russian nobleman had the power to do anything he wished,

stole into my cousin's compartment at night and killed him."

"Wonderful! wonderful!" said the Czar, in a musing tone. "Are you sure of all this?"

"Absolutely. I give you my word as a Romanoff Princess that it is true."

"And the boy? Do you know where he is? He can be given up to justice?"

"The boy," replied the Princess solemnly; "no longer exists. Overwhelmed with horror at what he had done, and feeling sure that the police would find him and punish him, he has made away with himself. He told me that it was his intention to do away with himself, and he has disappeared!"

At this moment Pypine entered, with Hardy's record. At the Czar's command, he read it, rapidly, and in a matter-of-fact, sing-song tone. It contained nearly every act of Hardy's life, except what had actually transpired within the four walls of his sleeping chamber, since he had set foot on Russian soil. He was accused of sympathizing with the Japanese, with having associated with Jews, and with having insulted the authorities at Vladivostok, by requesting that the Imperial government to use its influence to secure him a clean towel in the hotel there, with having worn an overcoat similar to the one left in the nihilist den on the evening of the explosion of the Frenchman's famous pill. Furthermore, he had fought a duel with the Prince Romanoff, in which he had been wounded. This fact furnished the motive for his alleged crime, which, coupled with his suspicious record, left little room in the Russian official mind for doubt of his guilt. Most of these points had already been covered by the story told by the Princess.

"As for the overcoat," she remarked, "if he con-

tinued to wear it he could not have left it; and your Majesty would soon discover, if your Majesty should stop for some time incognito in Vladivostok, that the power of the Imperial government is by no means belittled, when it is asked to use its influence in the procuring of a clean towel!"

The Emperor arose and pressed his hand to his brow, as though he were suffering with headache.

"Little Father," said Romanova, "this man saved my life, my honour. There are features in the case which, if it is tried, do not reflect credit upon my dead cousin's name. Grant my prayer; let Mr. Hardy be freed, and the report given out that the police have secret proof of his innocence, but are on track of the real culprit," and she sank again upon her knees.

"Rise, daughter," said the Czar kindly. "We had already decided upon his course. It's a relief to know that he is innocent—the American Ambassador is so troublesome. Pypine, see that this is done. Tell the proper authorities that it is our will. Pypine, what is the news of the morning?"

"Little, your Imperial Majesty. The cowardly Japanese have sunk two Russian cruisers, treacherously stealing upon them in the night; the discontent among the workmen in the iron factories is reported as growing; there has been a small massacre of Jews in Kieff—a trivial affair; a clash between troops and rioters in Helsingfors is reported, quickly suppressed, however, by the troops firing on the rioters; and an abortive plot against the sacred person of your Imperial Majesty has been unearthed and the traitors lodged in prison. In general, the empire is in a state of serenity, and the devotion and love of your Imperial Majesty's faithful subjects amounts almost to worship."

Romanova, making a low obeisance, backed toward the door. The Czar had forgotten her. He wrung his white hands nervously, muttering,

"God help me and my poor people! What shall

I do?"

In the anteroom without Romanova stopped Pypine and said to the old man:—

'Do you want me for a friend?"

"Does your Highness's take me for a fool?" asked Pypine." I would do anything in my power to secure your Highness's influence and patronage."

"Then see that his Imperial Majesty's wishes in regard to Hardy, the American, are carried out immediately. You know how many cares oppress the Little Father's mind."

"He shall be released to-day," replied Pypine.

"I shall not forget it," murmured the Princess. "Where is he now?"

"In the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul."

"Horrible!" gasped the Princess. "He must not sleep there to-night, Pypine!"

# CHAPTER XLVI

# THE GREAT ANT TRAIL

THAT part of Siberia which lies east of the great inland sea, Lake Baikal, and west of the mighty Amur, which here turns abruptly and bends northward, is known as trans-Baikalia. The Stanovoi range of mountains, continuing to the south, divides it nearly in halves, forming a watershed that feeds the lake on one side and the Amur and its tributaries on the other.

The trans-Siberian railway, now the great artery through which the blood of Russia flows uninterruptedly from Alexandrovna to Vladivostok and Port Arthur, pierces these mountains at an advantageous point, and, passing through Stretinsk, breaks into Manchuria.

And now we must change our metaphor, and call it not an artery, but an opening wedge.

The time has come when this road must be tested to the utmost, and put to that use which all warlike nations have in view in the building of great roads of any sort—the transportation to the frontiers of troops and munitions of war. The battleships of Japan are pounding away at Port Arthur by sea, and her armies investing it by land.

If this stronghold falls, a dream of empire falls with her, for Russia has at last so entrenched herself at the threshold of the East and the skirts of the Pacific, that she is face to face with the people who dwell in the islands.

The trans-Siberian railway cuts off a large tract of northern Manchuria, nearly the whole of it, in fact; and those who have followed Russian policy for a hundred years back and read between the lines of her diplomacy, believe that she means simply to absorb and gain possession of this vast and rich territory. Then little, sleepy, filthy Corea will become simply a bit of Russian sea-beach, and the very existence of Japan will be imperilled.

No one understands this better than the Japanese themselves, whose statesmen are as far-seeing as any the world has ever known. The whole Japanese people, too, comprehend the situation to a wonderful extent, and the nation realizes that the time has come when it must fight. They know, moreover, that they must strike hard in the very beginning of the struggle, and disable their unwieldy but brave and powerful foe while he is still but imperfectly prepared.

The blows that they have already struck have staggered the world with their suddenness and crushing effect; and so along the entire length of the Siberian railway, for thousands of miles, trains are thundering, laden with frost-bitten and suffering, but patient subjects of the Czar, coming on to the Pacific to shoot down the soldiers of the Mikado, or, if the Virgin so wills, to be shot down by them.

On a vast, colossal scale, it is an endless trail of ants threading their way across a continent to do battle with another swarm. Without the trans-Siberian road, built and conceived in the beginning for just such a purpose as this, it would have been impossible for the blood of Russia to flow into Manchuria and be spilled there, and the dream of empire would have been still many, many years from fulfilment; and even now there are delays, due to the

feebleness of the road-bed and the severe strain to which it is put, as well as to the dearth of rolling stock and supplies. Rails must be laid across Lake Baikal, on the ice, and frequent repairs must be made, while the long ant trail is interrupted and the poor, shivering ants, sent so many miles to kill, suffer and die of exposure and the bitter cold of the great Siberian plains.

On a river in trans-Baikalia that runs for many miles parallel with this mighty ant trail, a sledge was flying eastward, drawn by three horses, all abreast. The river was frozen to the very heart, and the snows, drifting over it, had swept and polished its surface till it was smooth as glass. Wrapped in furs, and his head shrouded in a thick cap, the driver sat on the forward seat, partly protected by the high-curving dash, and managed the lines. On a low seat behind him were a man and a woman, also wrapped deep in robes of fur, while a third woman sat silent in the bottom of the sledge.

Somewhere behind them the rails had spread, and the road had given out, so that the trains were

being halted while repairs were made.

There Frederick Courtland Hardy, on his way to Stretinsk, had overtaken the Princess, hastening to the front, undergoing all hardships, entirely forgetful of self, that she might employ her strength, her fortune and her high courage and example in the relief of her wounded and suffering countrymen.

She greeted Hardy with frank friendliness, explained her mission and told him that he had arrived just in time to help her carry out a plan of hers.

"We can take sledges down the river," she said, "to Petrovsky-Zavod, where I have no doubt we shall be able to catch an outgoing train. I should have started before, but was deterred by the fact

that—that—in fact, I was afraid. Now, with my gallant defender of the Amur, I shall have no hesitation in going. Will you come with us? With my maid and me?"

Thus invited, he could not refuse. In fact, the moment his eyes fell upon her, all his resentment vanished. Her gaiety, her coquetry, had disappeared. She was pale and sorrowful, and, need it be said, more beautiful than ever. What if she had loved Romanoff? Romanoff was dead now, and when a man dies he pays all debts. Why should not Hardy enjoy these few hours in her presence, before taking up again the burden of his life at Stretinsk?

Suppose she was only using him as a convenience? Even so, it is an honour to be a mere convenience for such a woman.

He had heard, too, in a vague way, that it was her testimony which had freed him from prison.

"Yes," he replied gravely, "I will go. I am overwhelmed by my good fortune. It was too great an honour to be hoped for, that I should ever be of service to your Highness again."

The mere presence of this woman transformed him from the merchant into the courtier and polished

gentleman.

"You forget," she said, while the ghost of one of her merry smiles lit up her beautiful features, "that such things are only to be said in French."

The maid Hardy scarcely noticed. She came out at the last moment, her head covered with a fur hood which almost entirely obscured her face, and took her place in the bottom of the sledge.

Desolate stretches of snow, with here and there a house, its roof covered with snow, nestling among the white hills.

312

The bells upon the galloping horses crashed musically, and their shod hoofs clattered and rang upon the ice.

"We are going almost as fast as the train," re-

marked the Princess.

"Much faster than the trains which we have just left," replied Hardy, "which are not going at all."

"Do you know," asked Romanova, "that not so very many months ago, it would have been necessary for me to make the entire journey from Stretinsk to Khabarovka by sledges? There are relays at the different military stations, and one could really have traversed the distance in a comparatively short time, if he found the river frozen all the way."

"I should have been pleased," ventured Hardy, to have served as your Highness's escort for the

entire distance."

The Princess vouchsafed no reply to this, and he had not the courage to glance at her face.

They passed occasional patches of forest, the limbs etched very black and distinct against the background of snow.

They had left the town about two o'clock, and it

was half-past three now.

"There must be a farmhouse somewhere near," observed Hardy, "if your Highness feels cold. I saw a large dog running among the trees a moment ago."

Just then the driver pointed with his whip toward the woods and crossed himself. The Princess also made the sign of the cross, and said quietly:—

"These are wolves. May the Holy Virgin protect us!"

Two large grey animals with bushy tails, that were dogs and yet not dogs, were seen flitting along

among the trees. Their tongues hung out of their mouths; and as they glanced from time to time at the sledge and its occupants, their teeth could be plainly seen.

"Have no fear," said Hardy, "they are so few

they will not dare attack."

At that moment a third joined the two and ran with them. They ran easily, flitting along as lightly as thistle down driven by the wind. The driver arose in his seat and cracked his whip over the horses' heads.

"Be careful Ivan," admonished the Princess, "do not tire them out. How far is it yet to Petrovsky?"

"Twenty versts," he replied; "we should make it in something over an hour, if the horses hold out. It was near here, over a year ago, that Farmer Gogol was dragged from his sledge by wolves and devoured. I had not heard of many being seen this year. The Virgin defend us!"

For at this moment one of the animals emitted a long, mournful howl, the most dismal and terrible

sound in nature.

"I beg of your Highness not to be——" Hardy began, but she laid her hand upon his arm, and whispered.

" Listen!"

"For, from the depths of the forest an answering howl was heard, then another, farther away, and still others, both up and down the river.

One of the wolves flitting along the bank lifted up his voice, to be in turn answered by a sporadic chorus from the forest.

There were now six wolves in sight, drifting out

and in among the trees like grey ghosts.

Soon one of these tripped daintily through the snow down the incline of the river bank, and trotted

#### THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA 314

along after the sledge on the ice, like a faithful

"They show no signs of attacking," said Hardy.

"They are famished," said the Princess, "but they are as patient as death, and as intelligent as humans. They are too few yet."

A second and a third joined the two upon the river, while the pack upon the bank steadily grew, and noiselessly, save for an occasional call into the deeps for help.

The maid sat motionless, without looking up or

stirring.

, Hardy lifted a rifle from the bottom of the sledge. "I could kill one of them now," he said, "and

perhaps that would scare them away."

the long ribbon of ice at terrible speed.

"It is not time yet, my friend," replied the Princess. "I will tell you. I am a Russian and I know when to shoot. You must not waste a single shot. Nothing would scare them away," she added. The isvoschik was using all his strength to keep his horses from exhausting themselves in one wild dash. Snorting with fear, they were tearing down

A dull, leaden sun, midway in the west, showed

in the fleecy sky.

# CHAPTER XLVII

### AN ETERNAL FAREWELL

NOT more than ten minutes could have elapsed in all since the appearance of the first wolf, and they had already gathered in terrifying numbers.

"How far is it yet to Petrovsky?" asked Hardy.

"About twenty versts," replied the man; "we can make it in an hour, if the horses hold out."

"But this is the same answer that he gave

before," said Hardy.

"He means that it is a long way," explained the Princess. "Twenty versts, about twenty versts! I fear the horses cannot run that far."

"But the wolves?" asked Hardy, "will they

not also tire?"

"They are very hungry," replied the Princess;

"they could run for ever!"

At this moment the entire pack wheeled, as if at a word of command, and drifted obliquely down upon the ice. Some ran beside the sledge, a couple of rods away, while those in the rear came up closer. Though the maddened horses were going at their utmost speed, their hoofs making a confused and incredibly rapid clatter upon the ice, the fierce wild dogs simply drifted, drifted along, without the least seeming effort. The pack was evidently nearly complete now, though an occasional grey form would flit out from among the trees, stand

and look with lifted head, and then join the chase

with a long, easy lope.

The little maid, crouching in the bottom of the sledge and bundled in furs, still remained motionless, speechless, as though paralyzed with terror. The Princess sat erect, looking straight ahead, the seal of a sublime courage set upon her pale, noble brow. The blood of the Romanoffs did not fear to die. She turned to the man at her side and smiled sweetly, more sweetly than he had ever seen a woman smile before.

"Forgive me, my friend," she said, "for bringing you into this fearful danger."

"I thank God," cried Hardy, "that I am here

and nowhere else!"

His voice rang out with sudden fervour, with a sob of joy.

"Thank you, my friend," said the Princess simply.

"May I shoot now?" asked Hardy.

Several of the wolves were close to one of the horses, and were looking up at the animal's throat. This was the horse which was running free, and he was crowded against the other two of the team in his terror.

"Not yet, not quite yet," replied the Princess, "they become maddened when they smell blood."

A moment later a wolf darted suddenly in and leaped at the throat of the horse, which reared, snorted with terror, and then bounded ahead with a sudden burst of incredible speed.

Hardy arose, and leaning against the driver's seat, took quick aim and fired at this particular wolf, the one which had begun the attack in earnest. He fell kicking and writhing upon the ice, and instantly the entire pack huddled above and about

him, snarling, snapping, scrambling, tearing, an indiscriminate mass of fur and fury, teeth and

hunger.

"There are eleven shots in the magazine, and five in the revolver," said Hardy, who saw a ray of hope in this action of the wolves. "With care, they should last us to Petrovsky. How far is it yet to Petrovsky, Ivan?" he shouted.

"About twenty versts," replied Ivan; "we should

reach it in-"

Hardy glanced behind. The struggling, snarling mass was still there on the ice, but already several members of the pack had left it, and were taking up the chase again. He stood watching them, as they came on in a line, leaving the carcass one by one. In less than five minutes they were all back by the sledge again, and the low sun was shining on a white pile of bones, that could be distinctly seen, far back on the river.

"It doesn't take long," muttered Hardy, "if it must come." Then he thought of the Princess,

shuddered, and breathed a prayer.

And still the horses ran on and on; the sledge was light, and they were winged with terror. Again and again Hardy shot—shot as never before and seldom missed. The fire of battle was in his veins, that fierce and deadly mastery of self which exalts a brave man when he both hunts and is hunted.

"Have courage," he cried; "we shall reach

Petrovsky yet!"

But now the chase took on a new and more dangerous feature. When a wolf was killed, not all of the pack dropped behind to devour him.

One, more than the others, sprang up at the back of the sledge as if to leap in, and Hardy, firing into the open mouth, fairly blew the fierce creature's head off. The flash and explosion for a moment terrified the following pack and caused it to drop back. He turned and aimed at an animal that was snapping at one of the horses, but when he pulled the trigger no report ensued. His face blanched as he dropped the weapon, and drew his revolver. The shots in the magazine of the rifle were all exhausted! In this moment's delay, a wolf succeeded in fastening its fangs in the horse's flank, and hung there, snarling. The unfortunate steed leaped forward with such violence that the traces parted, and instantly all the wolves were tearing at him, pulling him down. The Princess had never before heard a horse scream in terror. It is a sound seldom heard except in battle.

"God have mercy, God have mercy"! she

groaned.

"Have courage," cried Hardy again, "he will soon be out of his agony, and I think that his death has saved our lives."

The two remaining horses did not seem to notice the loss of their companion, as the sledge glided easily over the smooth ice. They still ran nobly on, though they were reeking with steam.

The sledge came to a bend in the river, and for a moment its occupants lost sight of the wolves.

"Perhaps they have given up the chase," said Hardy, "perhaps they are satisfied with the horse."

But the Princess shook her head.

"They will never give over the chase," she said; and at that moment a grey form flitted around the bend in the river; two, three, half a dozen, and soon twenty or thirty of the pack were again about the sledge, leaping at it and at the horses with sharp, short yelps and snarls, their red tongues lolling, their jaws flecked with blood and foam.

1

"There! there!" cried the isvoschik, pointing down the river, with the handle of his whip, "Petrovsky! Petrovsky! Bless the Virgin!'

The rays of the setting sun fell full upon the dome of a Greek church, but it was a conspicuous object,

and far away.

A wolf was hanging to the neck of one of the horses. Him Hardy shot, and leaning over the curved dash, discharged his weapon into the body of another that was clinging to the other horse.

"Elizabetha," he said, turning to the Princess, his face white, but glorified, "that is the last shot. If there were but one more, we might reach Petrovsky. Here, with death for a witness, I tell you that I love you. In the presence of death there is no rank, there are no princesses, no merchants. I love you, dear."

She arose and threw herself upon his breast. For a long minute they stood thus, clasped in each other's arms, lip to lip, forgetful even of death itself.

The wolves came on again. They ran snarling

up to the sledge, for the last attack.

Then the little maid seated on the floor arose from her bundle of furs, and tore the hood from her The rays of the setting run were shining in her face.

"Look into my eyes once more," she cried, "oh, let me look upon your face again, one long, last look!"

Hardy raised his head.

"Aisome! Wang!" he gasped, in wonder.
"Farewell, my beloved"; and her voice sounded like the voice of a priestess, chanting, "I give you to her and happiness, I, who have loved you most!" and she leaped among the wolves.

A path beaten in the snow led up the river bank

# 320 THE PRINCESS ROMANOVA

into the outskirts of Petrovsky, and up this the tired horses dashed, their noble run at an end.

Several of the wolves followed even to the top of the bank, glanced at the houses and the villagers swarming from them, and slunk away. One of the horses, his strong heart bursting, fell dead beside his mate. Hardy stood erect in the sledge, holding the swooning Princess in his arms.

Tears were streaming down his cheeks.

THE END

# Ward, Lock & Co's POPULAR FICTION

# STANLEY WEYMAN

## MY LADY ROTHA.

A Romance of the Thirty Years War.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW says:—" No one who begins will lay it down before the end, it is so extremely well carried on from adventure to adventure."

## ANTHONY HOPE

#### COMEDIES OF COURTSHIP.

THE SPEAKER says:—" In this volume Mr. Hope is at his happiest in that particular department of fiction in which he reigns supreme.'

#### HALF A HERO.

THE ATHENÆUM says:—"Mr. Hope's best story in point of construction and grasp of subject. His dialogue is virile and brisk."

#### MR. WITT'S WIDOW.

THE TIMES says :- " In truth a brilliant tale."

#### A. E. W. MASON

LAWRENCE CLAVERING.

# SIR A. CONAN DOYLE

## A STUDY IN SCARLET.

With a note on Sherlock Holmes by Dr. Joseph Bell. Illustrations by George Hutchinson.

## H. RIDER HAGGARD

# AYESHA.

The Sequel to "She." Thirty-two full-page illustrations by Maurice Greiffenhagen.

### S. R. CROCKETT

## JOAN OF THE SWORD HAND.

THE DAILY MAIL says:—"A triumph of cheery, resolute narration. The story goes along like a wave, and the reader with it."

#### STRONG MAC.

THE MORHIMO POOR SAYS:—" At the very outset the reader is introduced to the two leading characters of what is truly a drama of real life. So vividly is the story told that it often reads like a narrative of things that have actually happened."

#### LITTLE ESSON.

A charming book, touched off with that tender mingling of sentiment and kindly, half-whimsical humour, of which Mr. Crockett long since proved himself supremely master. The sorrows and smiles, of which domestic comedy is made up in this modern life of ours, have seldom been made felicitously realized in print.

#### MAX PEMBERTON

#### PRO PATRIA.

THE LIVERPOOL MERCURY says :—"A fine and distinguished piece of imaginative writing; one that should shed a new lustre upon the elever author of 'Kronstadt.'"

#### CHRISTINE OF THE HILLS.

THE DAILY MAIL says:—"Assuredly he has never written anything more fresh, more simple, more alluring, or more artistically perfect."

#### A GENTLEMAN'S GENTLEMAN.

THE DAILY CHRONICLE says :—" This is very much the best book Mr. Pemberton has so far given us."

#### THE GOLD WOLF.

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS says:—"From the beginning Mr. Pemberton weaves his romance with such skill that the tangled skein remains for long unravelled . . . marked by exceptional power, and holds the attention firmly."

#### E. F. BENSON

## LIMITATIONS.

## HARRISON G. RHODES

#### CHARLES EDWARD.

THE FREEMAN'S JOURNAL says:—"The book simply bubbles over with quiet fun, and is a regular fountain of the best class of humour."

## E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

#### THE SECRET.

The preservation of the secret, which is one of international movement, furnishes adventures, complications and by-plots of a kind that excel its author's best conceptions.

#### A LOST LEADER.

THE DAILY GRAPHIC says:—"Mr. Oppenheim almost persuades us into the belief that he has really been able to break down the wall of secrecy which always surrounds the construction of a Cabinet, and has decided to make an exposure on the lines of a well-known American writer. He also touches upon the evils of gambling in Society circles in a manner which should be applauded by Father Vaughan, and, in addition, treats us to a romance which is full of originality and interest from first to last."

## MR. WINGRAVE, MILLIONAIRE.

THE BRITISH WERKLY says:—"Like good wine, Mr. Oppenheim's novels need no bush. They attract by their own charm, and are unrivalled in popularity. No one will read this present story without relishing the rapid succession of thrilling scenes through which his characters move. There is a freshness and unconventionality about the story that lends it unusual attractiveness."

#### A MAKER OF HISTORY.

THE STANDARD says:—"Those who read 'A Maker of History' will revel in the plot, and will enjoy all those numerous deft touches of actuality that have gone to make the story genuinely interesting and exciting."

#### THE MASTER MUMMER.

THE DUNDER ADVERTISER says:—" 'The Master Mummer' is a remarkable novel, such as only E. Phillips Oppenheim can write. No other author could make the wildly extravagant not only natural, as makebelieve goes, but actually moving. It is a beautiful story that is here set within a story."

#### THE BETRAYAL

THE DUNDER ADVERTISER says:—"Mr. Oppenheim's skill has never been displayed to better advantage than here. . . . He has excelled himself, and to assert this is to declare the novel superior to nine out of ten of its contemporaries."

## ANNA, THE ADVENTURESS.

THE GLOBE says:—"The story is ingeniously imagined and eleverly wrought out. Mr. Oppenheim has the gift of invention, and keeps his readers on the tenter-hooks of suspense."

THE DAILY NEWS says:—"Mr. Oppenheim keeps his readers on the alert from cover to cover and the story is a fascinating medley of romance and mystery."

#### E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM-continued.

#### THE YELLOW CRAYON.

THE DAILY EXPRESS says:—"Mr. Oppenheim has a vivid imagination and much sympathy, fine powers of narrative, and can suggest a life history in a sentence. As a painter of the rough life of mining camps, of any strong and striking scenes where animal passions enter, he is as good as Henry Kingsley, with whom, indeed, in many respects, he has strong points of resemblance."

#### A PRINCE OF SINNERS.

VANITY FAIR says:—"A vivid and powerful story. Mr. Oppenheim knows the world and he can tell a tale, and the unusual nature of the setting in which his leading characters live and work out their love story, gives this book distinction among the novels of the season."

#### THE TRAITORS.

THE ATHENEUM says:—"Its interest begins on the first page and ends on the last. The plot is ingenious and well managed, the movement of the story is admirably swift and smooth, and the characters are exceedingly vivacious. The reader's excitement is kept on the stretch to the very end."

# A MILLIONAIRE OF YESTERDAY.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH says:—"The story abounds in dramatic situations, and there is more than one note of pathos which at once captures our sympathies. We cannot but welcome with enthusiasm a really well-told story like 'A Millionaire of Yesterday."

## THE SURVIVOR.

THE NOTTINGHAM GUARDIAN says:—"We must give a conspicuous place on its merits to this excellent story. It is only necessary to read a page or two in order to become deeply interested. A story marked by brilliant and terse narration, vivid touches of characterization, and a plot that is consistent and yet fruitful in surprises."

#### THE GREAT AWAKENING.

THE YORKSHIRE POST says:—"A weird and fascinating story, which, for real beauty and originality, ranks far above the ordinary novel."

#### AS A MAN LIVES.

h

THE SKETCH says:—"The interest of the book, always keen and absorbng, is due to some extent to a puzzle so admirably planned as to defy the penetration of the most experienced novel reader."

#### A DAUGHTER OF THE MARIONIS.

THE SCOTSMAN says:—"Mr. Oppenheim's stories always display much melodramatic power and considerable originality and ingenuity of construction. These and other qualities of the successful writer of romance are manifest in 'A Daughter of the Marionis.' Full of passion, action, strongly contrasted scenery, motives, and situations."

#### E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM-continued.

#### MR. BERNARD BROWN.

THE ABERDEEN DAILY JOURNAL says:—"The story is rich in sensational incident and dramatic situations. It is seldom, indeed, that we meet with a novel of such power and fascination."

## THE MAN AND HIS KINGDOM.

THE FREEMAN'S JOURNAL says:—"It is high praise to say that in this novel the author has surpassed his previous thrilling and delightful story. "The Mysterious Mr. Sabin." Yet that high praise is eminently deserved. The story is worthy of Merriman at his very best. It is a genuine treat for the ravenous and often disappointed novel reader."

#### THE WORLD'S GREAT SNARE.

THE WORLD says:—"If engrossing interest, changing episode, deep insight into human character, and bright diction are the sine que non of a successful novel, then this book cannot but bound at once into popular favour. It is so full withal of so many dramatic incidents, thoroughly exciting and realistic. There is not one dull page from beginning to end."

#### A MONK OF CRUTA.

THE BOOKMAN says:—"Intensely dramatic. The book is an achievement at which the author may well be gratified."

## MYSTERIOUS MR. SABIN.

THE LITERARY WORLD says:—"As a story of interest, with a deep-laid and exciting plot, this of the 'Mysterious Mr. Sabin' can hardly be sur

## L. G. MOBERLY

#### THAT PREPOSTEROUS WILL.

THE DAILY GRAPHIC says:—"We could wish that every novel were as pleasant, unsophisticated and readable as this one."

THE GLOBE says:—"Molly is a bright, clever, affectionate damsel and the author has succeeded in making her as fascinating to the reader as to her hero, Alan Dayrell."

# HOPE, MY WIFE.

THE GENTLEWOMAN says:—" Miss Moberly shows the same nice skill in sketching character in 'Hope, my Wife' as in her earlier novel, 'That Preposterous Will.' She interests us so much in her heroine, and in her bero, that we follow the two with pleasure through adventures of the most improbable order."

#### DIANA

A remarkably clever story, finely written, with scene after scene to bring tears to the eye of the reader who revels in Mrs. Wood and Miss Braddon. Undoubtedly one of the best stories published for a long while.

# JUSTUS MILES FORMAN

### JOURNEYS END.

THE COURT JOURNAL says:—"Surprisingly fresh, abounding in touches of observation and sentiment, while the characters are drawn with exceptional skill, the 'red-haired young woman' being a haunting figure."

#### MONSIGNY.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH says:—"The novel is admirable, the idea is very cleverly worked out, and is of an interesting character. The book is worthy of much praise."

#### THE GARDEN OF LIES.

THE DAILY NEWS says:—"This novel is far in advance of anything that Mr. Forman has hitherto accomplished. 'The Garden of Lies' belongs to that class of story which touches the heart from the first. It contains scenes which are alive with real passion, passages that will stir the blood of the coldest, and whole chapters charged with a magic and a charm. It is a real romance, full of vigour and a clean, healthy life."

#### TOMMY CARTERET.

THE DAILY CHRONICLE says:—"This is a fine book, thoroughly fine from start to finish. The conception has a great deal of originality about it, and the manner of its development is an achievement to be proud of. We willingly place our full store of compliments on Mr. Forman's splendid and successful book."

## BUCHANAN'S WIFE.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH says:—"" Buchanan's Wife' may be regarded as another success for an already successful author. It contains all the elements to attract, and is written in such a graceful manner that the reader is held delighted and enthralled to the end."

## A MODERN ULYSSES.

The verve and the vigour of the story are splendid, and few men, and certainly no woman, will follow unmoved the hero's strange experiences and his preservation from the greater perils of the soul through the memory of the woman he loves. How that woman comes back into his life only when the gipsy blood of the wanderer has become the strongest instinct in the man the author has finely realized.

#### GEORGE FREDERICK TURNER

## FROST AND FRIENDSHIP.

THE PALL MALL GAZETTE says:—"A tale one reads without effort and rises from with brightened wits. It is good and original. King Karl, with the steel hand in a velvet glove; Miss Anchester, an enigma of love and duty; and the hero himself, a typical Englishman, are personages who make a sharp impression of reality."

# ARTHUR W. MARCHMONT

#### WHEN I WAS CZAR.

THE PREEMAN'S JOURNAL says:—"A very brilliant work, every page in it displays the dramatic talent of the author and his capacity for writing smart dialogue."

## BY SNARE OF LOVE.

THE OUTLOOK says:—"As a writer of political intrigue, Mr. Marchmont has scarcely a rival to-day, and his latest novel worthily upholds his reputation."

### THE QUEEN'S ADVOCATE.

THE LIVERPOOL COURIER says :- "Mr. Marchmont has not been able to resist the temptation to write a romance around the tragic end of the Obrenovitch dynasty, and his narrative skill is at his best in this tale. One has sometimes wondered in reading this author's works when his invention will give out. But his resource seems inexhaustible, and his spirits never flag."

#### COURIER OF FORTUNE.

THE DUNDER COURIER says:—"The author has succeeded in producing a most thrilling and romantic tale of France, which has the advantage of being exciting and fascinating without being too improbable. An additional feature of the book is the amount of wit that runs throughout the story."

#### BY WIT OF WOMAN.

THE LEICESTER Post says:—"The novel rivets the deep interest of the reader, and holds it spellbound to the end. Mr. Marchmont, accordingly, must be complimented on making a very welcome and notable addition to the library of fiction."

#### IN THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM.

In this story thrilling adventures occur on every page, excitement is kept at breathless point. Threading the whole tale pretty situations develop the love interest in a fascinating style. Quite the most powerfully interesting book its author has written.

## GEORGE HORTON

#### A FAIR INSURGENT.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH says:—"Mr. George Horton has given us a most thrilling romance which, both in invention and workmanship, should take high rank among books of adventure. The author has the power of exciting real interest in the puppets of his capital book, and the art of telling an exciting story thoroughly well."

## PRINCESS ROMANOVA.

A more thrilling and exciting tale has not been written for many a long day.

#### FRED M. WHITE

#### THE CRIMSON BLIND.

THE SHEFFIELD TELEGRAPH says:—"'The Crimson Blind' is one of the most ingeniously conceived 'detective' stories we have come across for a long time. Each chapter holds some new and separate excitement. The pace is kept with such vigour that the reader arrives breathless at the last page. It is the sort of story that one feels compelled to read at a sitting."

#### THE CARDINAL MOTH.

THE BRITISH WERKLY says:—"A brilliant orchid story, full of imaginative power. This is a masterpiece of construction, convincing amid its unlikeliness, one of the best novels of the season."

#### THE CORNER HOUSE.

THE WESTERN MORNING News says:—"The book is crammed with sensation and mystery, situation piled on situation until one is almost bewildered. The secret of The Corner House is kept until the closing chapters, and it is impossible to lay the book aside until the secret is discovered. It is an excellent romance which will be eagerly read."

#### THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN.

THE DUBLIN DAILY EXPRESS says:—"Mr. F. M. White is one of the princes of fiction, A stirring tale full of the spice of adventure, breathless in interest, skilful in narrative. . . . Who could refrain from reading such a story?"

#### THE SLAVE OF SILENCE.

THE SCOTSMAN says:—"A book which will in no way lessen its author's reputation for first class work."

#### ARCHIBALD EYRE

#### THE TRIFLER.

THE DAILY EXPRESS says:—"A most cleverly contrived farcical comedy, full of really fresh incidents, and a dialogue that is genuinely amusing; there is not a character who is not always welcome and full of entertainment."

#### THE CUSTODIAN.

THE MORNING POST says:—"An exceptionally clever and entertaining novel; the reader is compelled to finish the book when he has once taken it up. . . . It is impossible to resist its attractions."

## THE GIRL IN WAITING.

THE DAILY MAIL says:—"This is quite a delightful book. The note is struck ingeniously and hilariously on the doorstep. It is a most enjoyable comedy, which must be read to be appreciated. We can cordially recommend it."

#### **HEADON HILL**

# A RACE WITH RUIN.

THE MORNING ADVERTISER says:—"A book by Headon Hill may always be relied on to provide good reading with plenty of incident. In 'A Race with Ruin' he fully maintains his reputation. A good, stirring story with an admirable and well-worked-out plot."

## MILLIONS OF MISCHIEF.

THE STAGE says:—"Not even the late Guy Boothby imagined anything more magnificently preposterous than the motive of Mr. Headon Hill's 'Millions of Mischief.'"

## THE AVENGERS.

THE TRIBUNE says:—"Mr. Hill's new book, 'The Avengers' has not a dull line, and one's pulse is kept on the jig all the time. He deserves the highest admiration for the consistent way in which he has avoided the slightest suspicion of probability."

#### UNMASKED AT LAST.

THE SHEFFIELD TELEGRAPH says:—"The story is in the author's most approved style, one of those alluringly audacious plots that Headon Hill revels in."

## SIR Wm. MAGNAY, BART.

## THE RED CHANCELLOR.

LLOYD'S NEWS says:—"A story full of action with its characters strongly drawn. Adventures and hairbreadth escapes abound; the style is refreshingly crisp, and the book altogether is one that can be most heartily recommended."

# THE MAN OF THE HOUR.

THE PALL MALL GAZETTE says:—" Of sterling merit. The plot of the book is as well contrived as in any tale of the kind we have read."

#### COUNT ZARKA.

THE WORLD says:—"Clever and entertaining. The narrative is brisk; it affords us glimpses of forest scenery which we like, and one remarkable departure from beaten tracks, a woman's duel in earnest. This feat of arms forms the subject of an illustration in his best manner by Maurice Greiffenhagen."

# FAUCONBERG. .

THE FIELD says:—"The book has a grip, and should be a success. The ultimate fate of Fauconberg is always in doubt from the beginning to the unexpected ending."

## THE MASTER SPIRIT.

THE COURT JOURNAL says:—"A capital story. The intensely interesting situation is developed with much ingenuity and power. . . . A really fascinating novel."

## **GUY BOOTHBY**

#### THE RACE OF LIFE.

THE ENGLISH REVIEW says:—" Ahead even of Mr. Cutcliffe Hyne and Sir Conan Doyle, Mr. Boothby may be said to have topped popularity's pole."

#### FOR LOVE OF HER.

THE COURT JOURNAL says:—"The many admirers of Mr. Guy Boothby will welcome another volume from his pen, and will not be disappointed in their expectations. The book shows vivid imagination and dramatic power. Moreover, sketches of Australian life, from one who knows his subject, are always welcome."

## A CRIME OF THE UNDER SEAS.

THE SPEAKER says:—"Is quite the equal in art, observation, and dramatic intensity to any of Mr. Guy Boothby's numerous other romances, and is in every respect most typical of his powers."

#### A BID FOR FREEDOM.

THE SHEFFIELD TELEGRAPH says:—"As fascinating as any of its fore-runners, and is as finely handled. 'A Bid for Freedom' discloses a power-fully written romance, which bristles with thrilling passages, exciting adventures, and hairbreadth escapes."

## A TWO-FOLD INHERITANCE.

Punch says:—" Just the very book that a hard-working man should read for genuine relaxation. This novel is strongly recommended by the justly appreciating 'Baron de Bookworms.'"

The Glasgow Herald says:—"Contains all the elements that have made Mr. Boothby's works popular the world over, and it will be read with zest by thousands of his admirers."

#### CONNIE BURT.

THE BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE says:—"One of the best stories we have seen of Mr. Boothby's."

THE GLASGOW HERALD says :- "Contains many stirring scenes of life in the Bush, and some really clever and attractive sketches of Australian character.

#### THE KIDNAPPED PRESIDENT.

Public Opinion says:—"Brighter, crisper, and more entertaining than any of its predecessors from the same pen."

# MY STRANGEST CASE.

THE YORKSHIRE POST says:—"No work of Mr. Boothby's seems to us to have approached in skill his new story. It is worked out with real ingenuity, and written with so much skill that the reader's attention is from first to last riveted on the narrative."

#### GUY BOOTHBY-continued.

#### FAREWELL, NIKOLA.

THE DUNDER ADVERTISER says:—"Guy Boothby's famous creation of Dr. Nikola has become familiar to every reader of fiction."

## MY INDIAN QUEEN.

THE SUNDAY SPECIAL says:—" 'My Indian Queen ' shows Mr. Boothby at his best. A vivid story of adventure and daring, bearing all the characteristics of careful workmanship."

#### LONG LIVE THE KING.

FIRE ABERDEEN FREE PRESS says:—"It is marvellous that Mr. Boothby's novels should all be so uniformly good. The story is written in Mr. Boothby's best style, and is full of interest from start to finish."

#### A PRINCE OF SWINDLERS.

THE SCOTSMAN says:—"Of absorbing interest. The exploits are described in an enthralling vein."

#### A MAKER OF NATIONS.

THE SPECTATOR says:—"'A Maker of Nations' enables us to understand Mr. Boothby's vogue. It has no lack of movement or incident."

## THE RED RAT'S DAUGHTER.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH says:—"Mr. Guy Boothby's name on the title-page of a novel carries with it the assurance of a good story to follow. This sprightly imaginative writer's latest romance is a clever and fascinating narrative."

#### LOVE MADE MANIFEST.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH says:—"A powerful and impressive romance. One of those tales of exciting adventure in the confection of which Mr. Boothby is not excelled by any novelist of the day."

#### PHAROS THE EGYPTIAN.

THE SCOTSMAN says:—"This powerful novel is weird, wonderful, and soul-thrilling. There never was in this world so strange and wonderful a love story, and Mr. Boothby's admirers will probably agree that the most marvellous fiction he has ever produced is 'Pharos the Egyptian.'"

## ACROSS THE WORLD FOR A WIFE.

THE BRITISH WEEKLY says:—"This stirring tale ranks next to 'Dr. Nikola' in the list of Mr. Boothby's novels. It is an excellent piece of workmanship, and we can heartily recommend it."

#### A SAILOR'S BRIDE.

THE MANCHESTER COURIER says:—"Few authors can depict action as brilliantly and resourcefully as the creator of 'Dr. Nikola."

#### GUY BOOTHBY-continued.

## THE LUST OF HATE.

THE DAILY GRAPHIC says:—"Mr. Boothby gives place to no one in what might be called dramatic interest, so whoever wants dramatic in terest let him read 'The Lust of Hate.'"

#### THE FASCINATION OF THE KING.

THE BRISTOL MERCURY says:—"Unquestionably the best work we have yet seen from the pen of Mr. Guy Boothby. . . . 'The Fascination of the King' is one of the books of the season."

## DR. NIKOLA.

THE SCOTSMAN says:—"One hairbreadth escape succeeds another with rapidity that scarce leaves the reader breathing space. . . . The interest of their experience is sufficient to stay criticism, and carry him through a story ingeniously invented and skilfully told."

#### THE BEAUTIFUL WHITE DEVIL.

THE YORKSHIRE POST says:-" A more exciting romance no man could reasonably ask for.

## A BID FOR FORTUNE.

THE MANCHESTER COURIER says:—"It is impossible to give any idea of the verve and brightness with which the story is told. Mr. Boothby may be congratulated on having produced about the most original novel of the very" of the year.

#### STRANGE COMPANY.

THE WORLD says:—"A capital novel. It has the quality of life and stir, and will carry the reader with curiosity unabated to the end."

#### THE MARRIAGE OF ESTHER.

THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN says:—"A story full of action, life, and dramatic interest. There is a vigour and a power of illusion about it that raises it quite above the level of the ordinary novel of adventure."

#### BUSHIGRAMS.

THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN says:—"Intensely interesting. Forces from us, by its powerful artistic realism, those choky sensations which it should be the aim of the human writer to elicit, whether in comedy or tragedy." tragedy.

#### SHEILAH McLEOD.

Mr. W. L. Alden in The New York Times, says:—"Mr. Boothby can crowd more adventure into a square foot of canvas than any other novelist."

#### DR. NIKOLA'S EXPERIMENT.

Illustrated by SIDNEY CAVELL.

## JOSEPH HOCKING

#### ROGER TREWINION.

T. P.'s Weekly says:—"It is a foregone conclusion that Mr. Hocking will always have a good story to tell. 'Roger Trewinion' can stand forth with the best, a strong love interest, plenty of adventure, an atmosphere of superstition, and Cornwall as the scene. And the scenes of lawfulness, the curse of hatred between two brothers, the greed of a self-sish mother, and the steadfastness of a sweetheart withdrawn from a grave, all serve to lead, in a series of graphically and finely written scenes, to the conclusion that 'there's no curse can stand against love.'".

## THE COMING OF THE KING.

THE GLASGOW HERALD says :-- " Mr. Hocking's latest romance exhibits THE GLASGOW HERALD says:—"Mr. Hocking's latest romance exhibits no diminution of ability, and is marked by insight and dramatic power. His imagination is fertile, and his skill in the arrangement of incident far above the average, and there is an air of reality n all his writing which is peculiarly charming. The author steadily but surely engages our attention, and we pass from episode to episode with a deepening sense of the reality of the tale. This is art of no common order."

## ESAU.

THE OUTLOOK says:—" Remarkable for the dramatic power with which the scenes are drawn and the intense human interest which Mr. Hocking has woven about his characters. 'Esau' is sure to be one of the novels

of the season."

THE BRITISH WEEKLY says:—"A brilliant, exciting narrative by a writer who has never penned a dull page."

#### GREATER LOVE.

THE NEWCASTLE CHRONICLE says:—"Though of a totally different character from Lest We Forget," Mr. Hocking's latest story is entitled to take rank along with that fine romance. The story arrests the attention from the first chapters, and soon becomes highly dramatic."

#### LEST WE FORGET.

Public Opinion says:—"His story is quite as good as any we have read of the Stanley Weyman's school, and presents an excellent picture of the exciting times of Gardiner and Bonner."

# AND SHALL TRELAWNEY DIE?

THE BRITISH WEEKLY says :- "We can strongly recommend both stories

THE WEEKLY SUN says:— We can strongly recommend both stories as healthy and hearty tales, sensational but not incredible."

THE WEEKLY SUN says:—"An engaging and fascinating romance. The reader puts the story down with a sigh, and wishes there were more of these breezy Cornish uplands, for Mr. Joseph Hocking's easy style of narrative does not soon tire."

## JOSEPH HOCKING—continued.

# JABEZ EASTERBROOK.

THE ROCK says:—"Real strength is shown in the sketches, of which that of Brother Bowman is most prominent. In its way it is delightful."

THE RECORD says:—"A book that can be read with interest and with profit. A clever tale, cleverly told."

#### THE WEAPONS OF MYSTERY.

"Weapons of Mystery" is a singularly powerful story of occult influences and of their exertion for evil purposes. Like all Mr. Hocking's novels, "Weapons of Mystery" has an underlying religious and moral purpose, but merely as a story, and quite apart from the purpose which was in the mind of the author, the tale has a curious fascination for the reader. The cleverly conceived plot, and the strange experience of the hero and heroine make "Weapons of Mystery" a story which it is not easy to put down when once commenced.

#### ZILLAH: A ROMANCE.

THE SPECTATOR says:—"The drawing of some of the characters indicates the possession by Mr. Hocking of a considerable gift of humour. The contents of his book indicate that he takes a genuine interest in the deeper problems of the day."

#### THE MONK OF MAR-SABA.

THE STAR says:—"Great power and thrilling interest.... The scenery of the Holy Land has rarely been so vividly described as in this charming book of Mr. Hocking's."

THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN says:—"The author has turned his visit

THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN says:—"The author has turned his visit to Palestine to good account... His descriptions of the wild scenery of different parts of the Holy Land are both vigorous and graphic, and the stories themselves are interesting."

#### THE PURPLE ROBE.

THE QUEEN says:—" Mr. Hocking's most interesting romance. It is exceedingly clever, and excites the reader's interest and brings out the powerful nature of the clever young minister. This most engrossing book challenges comparison with the brilliance of Lothair. Mr. Hocking has one main fact always before him in writing his books—to interest his readers; and he certainly succeeds admirably in doing so."

#### THE SCARLET WOMAN.

THE METHODIST RECORDER says:—"This is Mr. Hocking's strongest and best book. We advise every one to read it. The plot is simple, compact and strenuous; the writing powerful. It brings out sharply the real character of the typical Jesuit, his training, motives, limitations, aims."

## JOSEPH HOCKING-continued.

#### ALL MEN ARE LIARS.

THE CHRISTIAN WORLD says:—"This is a notable book. Thoughtful people will be fascinated by its actuality, its fearlessness, and the insight it gives into the influence of modern thought and literature upon the

minds and morals of our most promising manhood."

THE STANDARD says:—"A striking book.... It is strong and earnest and vigorous; it shows knowledge of the lower class, and impatience and contempt of shams of all sorts."

#### ISHMAEL PENGELLY: AN OUTCAST.

THE RECORD says:- "As a story this book is a splendid piece of writing; every detail is interesting, and the situations it creates are novel and striking."

THE ATHENEUM says:—"The book is to be recommended for the dramatic effectiveness of some of the scenes. The wild, half-mad woman is always picturesque wherever she appears, and the rare self-repression of her son is admirably done."

#### THE STORY OF ANDREW FAIRFAX.

THE MANCHESTER EXAMINER says:—"Rustic scenes and characters are drawn with free, broad touches, without Mr. Buchanan's artificiality, and, if we may venture to say it, with more realism than Mr. Hardy's country pictures."

THE LIVERPOOL MERCURY says:—"Beautifully told. There are few books better adapted to widen the mind and discipline the judgment than this noble story."

## THE BIRTHRIGHT.

THE SPECTATOR says:—"This volume proves beyond all doubt that Mr. Hocking has mastered the art of the historical romancist. 'The Birthright' is, in its way, quite as well constructed, as well written, and as full of incident as any story that has come from the pen of Mr. Conan Doyle or Mr. Stanley Weyman."

#### MISTRESS NANCY MOLESWORTH.

THE SCOTSMAN says:—" "Mistress Nancy Molesworth is as charming a story of the kind as could be wished, and it excels in literary workmanship as well as in imaginative vigour and daring invention. . . . It would hardly be possible to tell a story of its kind better, or to leave the reader better pleased at the end."

#### FIELDS OF FAIR RENOWN.

THE SCOTSMAN says:—"Mr. Joseph Hocking's 'Fields of Fair Renown' is a novel with a purpose, and the theme is worked out with a good deal of force and effective power. . . it is both interesting and powerful."

THE DUNDER ADVERTISER says:—"Mr. Hocking has produced a work.

which his readers of all classes will appreciate. . . . some of the most beautiful aspects of disposition." There are exhibited

## LOUIS TRACY

#### A FATAL LEGACY.

THE SCOTSMAN says:—"On taking up a book by Mr. Tracy one can always be sure that a feast of originality is about to be served up to him, with a most piquant dressing in the way of dialogue and other accessories, and in this particular case the reader will not be disappointed. In all the annals of fiction a more ingenious or startlingly original plot has not been recorded.

#### RAINBOW ISLAND.

THE LITERARY WORLD says:—"Those who delight in tales of adven ture should hall 'Rainbow Island' with poyous shouts of welcome. Agreely have we met with more satisfying fare of this description than in its pages."

## THE ALBERT GATE AFFAIR.

THE BIRMINGHAM POST says:—"Will worthily rank with 'The Fatal Legacy' and 'Rainbow Island,' both books full of :wholesome excitement and told with great ability. The present volume is an excellent detective tale, brimfull of adventure. Told in Mr. Tracy's best style."

## THE PILLAR OF LIGHT.

THE EVENING STANDARD says:—"So admirable, so living, so breathlessly exciting a book. The magnificent realism of the lighthouse and its perils, the intense conviction of the author, that brings the very scene he pictures before the reader's eyes with hardly a line of detached description, the interest of the terrible dilemma of the cut off inhabitants of the 'Pillar' are worthy of praise from the most jaded reader."

#### HEART'S DELIGHT.

THE DUNDER ADVERTISER says:—"The name of Louis Tracy on the covers of a volume is a sufficient guarantee that the contents are worthy of perusal. His latest novel 'Heart's Delight' establishes more firmly than ever the reputation which he founded on 'The Final War'; like that notable book it has a strong martial flavour."

THE STANDARD says:—"Is in every respect worthy of the man who gave us 'Rainbow Island.'"

#### MRS. C. N. WILLIAMSON

## THE GIRL WHO HAD NOTHING.

MR. DOUGLAS SLADEN in THE QUEEN says:— A story one might expect from the famous author of 'The Lightning Conductor.' It differs from the ordinary run of detective and adventure stories in having a really charming woman for its conspirator. One of the prime essentials of a good story is to command the sympathies of the reader and make her anxious in all the trials of the hero and heroine, which ever is protagonist. But most writers forget this, so Mrs. Williamson's 'The Girl who had Nothing' comes to us as an oasis in a desert."

٠.





STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES CECIL H. GREEN LIBRARY STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305-6004 (415) 723-1493

All books may be recalled after 7 days

DATE DUE

